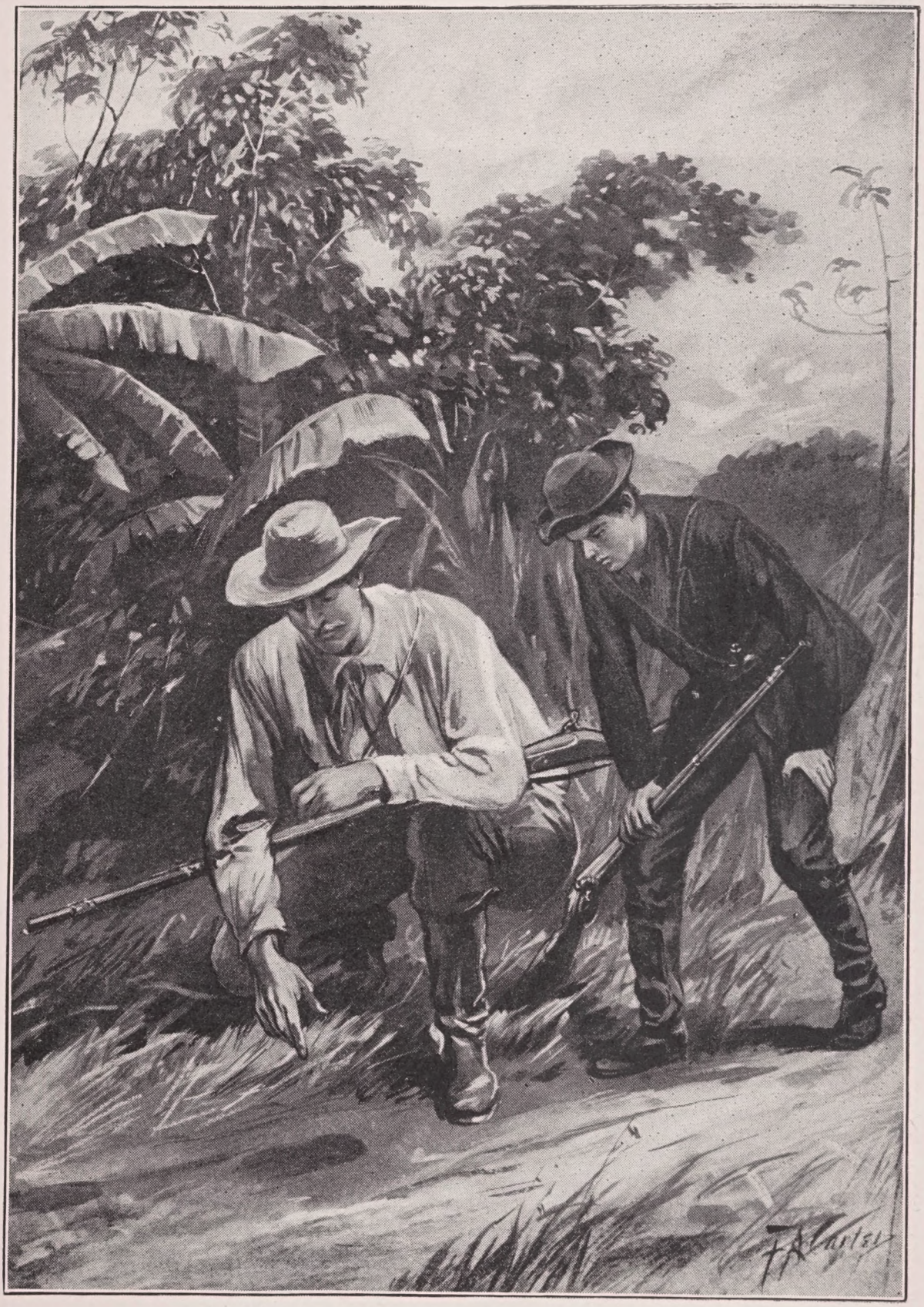

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"I DON'T SEE ANYTHING BUT A TRACK"

# *In the* CAMP *of the* CREEKS

*by*

Louis Pendleton

*Author of*

"King Tom and The Runaways."

"In the Okefinokee" etc

Illustrated

*by*

F. A. Carter

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# In the Camp of the Creeks

## CHAPTER I

### A DISREGARDED WARNING

THEY had left the open pine woods behind them and penetrated the outer rim of the Chickasawhatchee swamp when, on entering a little open space shadowed by great trees, the young man who led the way suddenly squatted and gazed intently at a depression in the damp, spongy earth before him.

"See that, Julian?"

"I don't see anything but a track," said the boy, bending down to look.

"Yes, but it wasn't no boot nor shoe that made that. It was a genuine moccasin, and yet I know nobody wears 'em in these parts, and there ain't no Injuns about."

Man and boy stood upright again and each looked hard into the other's face. The latter,

who was slender and straight, with dark eyes, a swarthy skin and black hair, was much better dressed than his florid, blue-eyed companion who wore brown jean trousers, a blue home-spun cotton shirt and a palmetto hat. Though not undersized for a boy of fifteen, Julian Curtis was indeed a little fellow when measured by Dan Dennard's more than six feet of height and powerful build.

It was early in the afternoon of the 27th of June, in the year 1836, when the two entered the Chickasawhatchee swamp in southwestern Georgia, one of the many characteristic morasses of a region wherein the Okefinokee and the Everglades are the most extensive and enduring examples. The outlying sections of the Chickasawhatchee have long since been cleared and much of the submerged land reclaimed, but at that time the swamp varied from four to eight miles in width and was more than fifteen miles in length. Like the Okefinokee of to-day, it consisted of flooded jungles and marshes, small lakes and forest-

covered islands, and was infested with a variety of wild animals and reptiles. By no white man had it as yet been fully explored, but Dan Dennard, a young farmer of the vicinity, was familiar with its more accessible recesses.

"There may be Indians about, though," said the boy, looking once more at the puzzling track, after an apprehensive glance around him. "I forgot to tell you that the news has come of an outbreak among the Creeks. They were talking about the fighting up in Stewart County at Uncle Cyrus's last night."

He then hurried on to tell all that he had heard. It appeared that, after firing on the steamer "Georgia" and killing all on board, a large band of Creek Indians had crossed the Chattahoochee River from the Alabama side, and on the night of May 13, attacked and set fire to the village of Roanoke in Stewart County. The whites stood their ground, but were again attacked before day on Sunday

morning of the fifteenth by about three hundred Indians. Being taken by surprise and so greatly outnumbered, they were compelled to retreat into a block-house for safety, nine whites and three blacks having been killed at the first fire and a dozen others wounded. The attacking party had apparently raised the siege and retired across the river, for there were no further reports of their doings until the 9th of June, three weeks later, when a desperate battle took place at Shepherd's plantation in the same county between a handful of whites and a considerable body of Indians. The local militia felt unequal to the task of subduing them, and while reinforcements from neighboring counties were awaited, the marauding band of Creeks retreated southward on the Georgia side of the Chattahoochee, after committing many depredations. It was believed they were on their way to join their kindred, the Seminoles, in Florida, who had worsted General Clinch in a battle on the Withlacoochee six months before.

Although two weeks had now passed since the Indians began their retreat south, and the farmhouse in the Chickasawhatchee woods where Julian Curtis had heard the news was little more than fifty miles distant from the scene of the later troubles, rumors of what had occurred had only recently arrived in that remote, thinly-settled region.

"That's what this track means; I'll bet those same Indians are in these woods," ventured Julian, again looking distrustfully into the dark recesses of the forest about them.

"Oh, I reckon not," answered Dennard coolly, though he examined the priming of his rifle as he spoke. "They ought to 'a' got h-yer long before this, and if they was bound straight for Fluridy the Chickasawhatchee would be a long ways out o' their road. They wouldn't strike Baker County. They would go down through Early and Decatur, 'longside o' the Chattahoochee. That's what they must 'a' done, unless they crossed back into Alabam'."

"But that track?" reminded Julian, pointing a finger at the spot.

"That is sort o' curious," admitted Dennard, "but what are them Injuns loafin' round h-yer for if they're makin' for Fluridy? It ain't in reason. No, I reckon that track must 'a' been made by some old white trapper from t'other side the swamp who's been 'mongst the Injuns and took a notion to wear moccasins."

"Don't you think we'd better go back and let people know?" suggested Julian, not quite convinced.

"You can trust Tom Carr to know it by this time if the Injuns is here, and he'll tell everybody," was the indifferent answer.

Indian warfare had for so long been regarded as a thing of the past, except so far as the struggle with the Seminoles in Florida was concerned, that this self-reliant young giant of the woods was not easily to be alarmed. Indeed, he found it difficult to believe the reports of the fighting in Stewart

County and suspected that the facts were grossly exaggerated. He was quite wrong, but his state of mind was reasonable enough. He was too young to remember the bitter struggle of 1812, when the Creeks sided with the British, and since then there had been no fighting of any consequence north of the Florida line. He knew that the remnant of the Creek nation had steadily retreated westward in advance of the settlements of the aggressive whites and had always regarded them as fully and finally "whipped."

However, the caution of an experienced hunter now led him to look about for other tracks and discover the direction in which they led. And several others were found, but the trail was promptly lost in the neighboring brush.

"I ain't a'scared," he said finally, as undisturbed as ever. "Lets go on in and take a look at my turkey-pen, and then, if you say so, we'll cut the trip short and come out again, and if anything is goin' on we'll be on hand."

Reassured by his elder's calm confidence, the boy agreed, and they again trudged forward. For the most part their route was marked by a fairly distinct path, but walking was not easy. Such comparatively open spots as lay in their course were usually little more than sloppy bogs, along the borders of which they carefully picked their way. And these were continually alternated with dense thickets of swamp reeds and tangled vines, in which the thorny, rope-like bamboo-briar luxuriated, ever ready to lay a ruthless hand upon their clothing and hold fast till a rent garment resulted, or until its tenacious grip was carefully loosed. And whether it were by bog or thicket, the interlacing branches of the crowding trees ever shut from their view the sun and tempered its light.

A half hour's tramp amid these difficulties brought them within view of a black, bayou-like stretch of water, and the boy knew they had now reached a submerged portion of the swamp. He had long looked forward to this

excursion. He had not been brought up in the neighborhood and knew little of the wilder woods of the country. His father was a circuit judge resident at Columbus, a thriving town on the Chattahoochee, about a hundred miles to the north; and a short while before the Indian outbreak Julian had been permitted to ride down to Baker County with an escort of two trusty negro men-servants in order to visit relations living near the Chickasawhatchee swamp. Mr. Cyrus Keswick, the uncle at whose house he was staying, forbade the bold and venturesome lad to fish or hunt in the Chickasawhatchee alone, and this had led to the friendship between Julian and Dan Dennard. For the boy was determined to "get a chance at the big game" in the swamp, and Dennard, who spent much time hunting and trapping—to the neglect of his farm, his critics said—was almost the only person in the vicinity to whom the Chickasawhatchee was anything but a vast unknown land.

Arrived at the borders of the dark lake, Julian's guide made haste to produce a canoe from its place of concealment in a clump of rushes, and the two got afloat. It was not the light, delicately-poised birch-bark canoe of the Canadian lake region, but a rather clumsy affair dug out of a section of a tree trunk, more suggestive of the old-fashioned horse trough than of an ordinary boat. It was neatly hollowed out, however, and carefully shaped at the ends so as to offer as little resistance as possible when propelled forward or backward. It was about twelve feet long, less than three feet in width at its widest, and was spanned by two thwarts. Though clumsy, it had the advantage of being less delicately poised than a bark canoe and its passengers could sit on the thwarts, as they used their paddles, without danger of tipping over.

"She mought be fancier," said Dennard, as they took their seats, "but she's my own make and I ain't ashamed o' her. She's car-

ried me over many a mile o' water in the Chickasawhatchee."

Speaking from all the wisdom of his limited experience, Julian declared that "she couldn't be better," and, in fact, under the impetus of her builder's powerful strokes, the canoe cut through the water in quite an admirable way, and by means of a dexterous twist of the rear paddle could readily be steered in and out of the windings of their course.

Never had Julian rested eyes on such a scene as was unrolled before him. Now a long winding reach of black bayou or lagoon bordered by trees standing knee-deep in the flood and flying a thousand spectral flags of gray Spanish moss; now a narrow, tortuous boat-trail among the crowding trunks of standing as well as fallen trees, among tangled masses of reeds that barred the way and must be beaten aside, beneath low-hanging branches dipping their finger-like leafage into the water, and drifts of vines and creepers trail-

ing down to the very surface of dark, still pools. There were thin-leaved cypresses towering on high (less like the cypress of Italy than the hemlock is like the pine); cypress "knees," or huge round, upreaching growths of the great tree's roots, rising from the wine-colored water a dozen feet from the parent stem; others lying in wait a few inches under the same dark water, as perilous to the swamp boat as a sunken reef to an ocean ship.

It was a veritable jungle, submerged in water of varying depths; and in the dim, half-glimpsed vistas opening here and there on either hand, as they pursued their course, they noted the hasty flight of some wild bird, the noisy leap from one branch to another of some startled animal; and from time to time, from far and near, came the sound of unfamiliar croaks and barks.

When they were within a short distance of the proposed stopping place Dennard suddenly uttered a warning "Sh!" and put down his paddle. Then, as they drifted in

silence round a bend, he brought his rifle quickly to his shoulder, took lightning aim, and fired.

## CHAPTER II

### WOLVES OR INDIANS

JULIAN was not a little startled, and his first agitated thought was "Indians!" But as soon as he grasped the situation he felt ashamed to think that he who so wished to become an experienced hunter had been so little on the alert. Against the muddy bank of a tussock around the bend, not fifty yards away, lay a long slender creature but half out of water struggling in death. The boy did not know what it was, but promptly took note of its glossy brown fur, its broad flat head, small eyes and ears, its long, flexible body, short powerful legs and webbed feet, as Dennard seized the paddle and sent the canoe forward.

"I got him this time," the young man cried joyfully, catching hold of the dying beast and lifting it into the canoe. "I knew

he was nosin' round this neighborhood. Look at that!—shot right through the head."

"What is it?" asked Julian.

"Never seen an otter skin?" cried Dennard, in surprise. "It's mighty late in the season," he went on to say, "but maybe I can cure that skin all right and get about two dollars for it."

As they resumed their journey, the young trapper inquired of the boy if any visitors showed themselves at his uncle's on the night before.

"Dr. Foscue stopped before sundown and stayed to supper, and Tommy Lumpkin rode out after dark," replied Julian. "They both brought news of the fighting up in Stewart. They think Uncle Cyrus ought to move into Newton if the Indians come this way, but he says he won't."

"He's got spunk, but maybe they're right. How was Miss Maggie,—sassy as usual? How did she treat them two fellers?"

"She was pretty 'sassy.' She laughed and

made a heap of fun of 'em. She said if the Indians did come, neither one of 'em would be in the fight."

"Did she say that?" laughed Dennard, immensely pleased. "Don't know but what she's right."

"Cousin Maggie is not apt to waste much time on either of those two," the boy added. There was no actual kinship between him and Miss Margaret Keswick, the niece of his deceased aunt's husband, but they were good friends and called each other cousin.

"Dr. Jim Foscue will be the lucky man, I reckon," remarked Dennard, suddenly looking very sober.

"I'll bet you he won't," declared Julian confidently. "She calls him old 'Physic Bottle.' She doesn't believe in doctors; she says they kill more people than they 'k-yo.'"

"Her head's level," cried Dennard, again convulsed with delighted laughter.

"And as for Tommy Lumpkin, she says he's a good-for-nothing counter-jumper—

measurin' out calico there in Newton when he ought to be ploughin' like a man.' She named her puppy 'Tommy,' and you just ought to hear her abuse that puppy!"

Once more the young man laughed, but his face quickly grew serious, as it occurred to him that Miss Maggie might not be in the habit of reserving all her merry, stinging shafts for the two unfortunates named.

"That's all very well," he said, "but what does she say about me?"

"You don't get off scot free either," was the answer, an amused twinkle in the boy's eye. "She calls you the 'scary trapper.' She says you haven't got the spunk of a chicken. She says when you come to Uncle Cyrus's you look at her as if you expected her to bite you. She says you'll say: 'How you come on, Miss Maggie?' Then you'll stand on one foot, then on the other, and then you'll say: 'It's fine weather for plantin' corn.' Then you'll look scareder

than ever, and directly you'll say: 'I got to go out and speak to Mr. Keswick on business, Miss Maggie.' And off you go, red in the face, and as soon as you are out of hearing she just laughs until she hollers"—this terrible Miss Maggie who was only sixteen years old!

As he spoke, Julian's unconscious gestures and changing facial expression and tone of voice indicated a surprising power of mimicry, and the effect was such as to fill the wincing Dennard with almost as much self-conscious misery as if the alarming Miss Maggie herself sat facing him in the boat.

"I hated to tell you, but I thought if I did, maybe the next time you'd know better," the shrewd boy continued. "Uncle Cyrus says it won't do for a young man to let a girl know he's afraid of her—she'll plague him to death."

"If I tell you the truth, Julian," said poor Dennard dolefully, "sometimes I'd as soon face a panther as Miss Maggie. She makes

me oneasy; I think she's laughin' at me all the time."

"You mustn't mind that," said Julian, evidently favoring, for his part, this most bashful of his young cousin's three suitors and wishing to encourage him. "She naturally likes to laugh and make fun of young men. She says she hates 'em, but I don't believe it. She says there isn't one in Baker County that she'd have, but she can't fool me. She says she'll have to wait ten years and then marry me."

"Just so she gives the cold shoulder to Dr. Jim and Tommy, I'm satisfied," said Dennard, now smiling sheepishly. "But shucks! she'll never look at a awk'ard feller like me, if there ain't another man in sight."

"Well she doesn't think you're a coward anyhow," declared George. "I heard her tell Uncle Cyrus last night that if the Indians did come, you were the only one of the three they could depend on."

"Did she say that, Julian, shore 'nough?"

demanded Dennard, flushing scarlet and brimming with satisfaction. This would be something to reflect upon hopefully for a week to come.

He fell into a revery and they moved on in silence. Shortly afterward a small island appeared before them and they landed. The shore was rimmed with a dense, luxuriant hammock growth, but above this was a high and dry acreage of pine barren, the whole length of which was less than a quarter of a mile, and the width not more than an eighth. Dennard said he called it "Little Island," and another about a mile distant and of far greater extent, "Big Island." He generally camped on the former when in the swamp over night.

As he spoke, he led the way through the hammock growth, dragging the dead otter after him. On the borders of the open stretch of pine land, he pointed out a rude palmetto-thatched shelter, under which his skins were hung during the trapping season. Near this were a spring and a brush tent. In construct-

ing the latter a slender pine sapling had been cut down and lashed at either end with bear-grass thongs to two small trees about ten feet apart. Against this cross-bar, which was some four feet from the ground, eight or ten other saplings were leaned at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and less than a foot apart. Over these had been arranged a large number of palmetto fans cut within a few feet of the spot, thus forming a thatch which was protected from gusts of wind by two or three other saplings laid diagonally across. On the ground under this thatched lean-to, which evidently provided a good shelter as long as the wind blew at the back and not into the open front, Julian observed a pile of gray moss, tons of which were hanging from the neighboring trees, and understood that this was the trapper's bed. At Dennard's suggestion, he dragged it out and spread it about where the sun could strike it, while his friend proceeded to skin the otter.

The boy admired the deftness with which

this was done, but was glad when the skin had been hung up and the carcass dragged some distance away and thrown into the bushes, for he was anxious to start on the proposed tramp around the island, visit the turkey-pen, and, if possible, "get a shot" at game worth the effort.

The sun was low when they set out across the stretch of dry land covered with scattering pines, and dotted with blackjack thickets and small, impenetrable clumps of fan-palmettoes. As they went forward, Dennard told how he trapped fur-bearing animals in the winter time. His snares were placed on the islands and at different points of the swamp itself, he said, usually on tussocks, small mounds of earth and decaying vegetation that rose here and there above the surrounding water. Any place where there was a foot of dry land "would do to set a trap on"; for the animals of the swamp, large and small, went everywhere, some perhaps leaping from tree to tree,

but none being averse to a swim in the water.

The turkey-pen was a trap of a different sort. It was built of sections of slender pine saplings, and was so arranged that when these wild fowl had followed the bait of shelled corn into it they could not get out, and thus were taken alive and unharmed. As Dennard and Julian drew near the spot they heard welcome sounds. Several captured turkeys were evidently trying to break through the cracks in the pen instead of regaining their freedom through the low passage by which they had entered, following the bait. This passage was a sort of tunnel starting on the outside and coming up in the centre of the pen. Once lured into the trap, the turkeys would walk round and round, looking always up and out and never down the hole almost at their feet. The light streaming from above apparently caused them to forget all about the path to freedom below.

Six of these unreasoning creatures were

found still struggling to escape through the narrow cracks in the pen. Taking them out one by one, Dennard tied their feet together and clipped their wings, remarking that there would be "turkey for a week" for Mr. Keswick's household as well as his own. Shouldering his fluttering burden, he returned at once to camp, leaving Julian to follow later, after a walk about the lower end of the island in search of game.

The boy persuaded himself that he would take delight in encountering a panther or a bear, both of which were to be found in the Chickasawhatchee, and he hoped that he would at least get a chance at a deer. No such ambitious dreams were realized, which was perhaps fortunate, but he did not return empty handed. He had almost given up in despair when he saw a large bird fly through the tree-tops and alight on a branch within easy range. He fired promptly, the game dropped, and running forward he was well pleased to find that he had shot a wild tur-

key. For the live birds were to be taken home and they needed game for supper. Besides, he felt sure that this was not a bad beginning, for, according to his friend, the turkey when at large was a wary bird.

The last hour of daylight was spent at the camp curing the otter skin. The fat being carefully scraped off with a butcher's knife, small holes were cut all around the skin, and into these bear-grass strings were inserted. The hide was then stretched between stout, upright stakes and a fire built near it to hasten the process of drying. While Dennard was thus engaged, under his friend's direction Julian built another fire, fried portions of his turkey cut into thin slices, and made coffee. It was quite dark when they sat down to eat heartily of their supper, and as the boy glanced about him at the dim outlines of the surrounding trees and heard now and then a distant sound made by some night-bird or prowling animal, he found the prospect of encountering alone a panther or a

bear less pleasing than it had been two hours earlier. He realized now more vividly than by daylight that the wild Chickasawhatchee was a place of danger.

"If the Indians were to camp in here it would be hard to get at 'em," he spoke up abruptly.

"You're mighty right," answered Dennard, lighting his pipe and puffing away unconcernedly. "They could git to Big Island by wadin' in from t'other side. The water ain't more'n waist deep over there. But I ain't studyin' 'bout Injuns. I'll believe in 'em when I see 'em. I aim to turn in d'rectly and have a good snooze."

He was arranging the bed of moss under the lean-to a short while later when he suddenly stopped to listen. Exclaiming, "What's that?" he crawled quickly from beneath the thatch and stood erect.

"I heard it before you noticed it," said the boy.

"It's over Big Island way," rejoined Den-

nard softly. "Now that's powerful curious. It ain't the time o' year for the wolves to be howlin' like that. Sh!"

Again it came to them on the gently flowing night breeze—a faint and far sound as of howling, or high pitched shouting.

"It ain't wolves surely. It must be people. But who on earth can be carryin' on like that?"

"It's the Indians!"

"Maybe so. Anyhow I'll soon find out."

Without another word Dennard hastened to cut some sticks of "fat," resinous pine from a seasoned old log, and lighting one of them at the fire, he led the way down the slope to the water's edge and they embarked in the canoe. Seated on the foremost thwart, Julian held aloft the torch, while his friend's regular and vigorous strokes of the paddle sent the little craft swiftly forward.

## CHAPTER III

### STRANGE DOINGS ON BIG ISLAND

During the next half hour scarcely a word passed between them, the boy's anxious questions being held in check by his companion's gravity of manner. Julian wondered if the Indians—for Indians he never doubted they were—had any canoes, and if they would discover and chase those who were now going to spy on them. At every turn of the course he fancied he saw dark faces and uplifted tomahawks among the crowding trees, and at every sound started apprehensively. Yet never once did he wish that he had been left behind.

Wilder and more awesome than ever seemed the Chickasawhatchee, as the red light of the pine torch now revealed but a few yards at a time of the dense jungles, or glanced along the sluggish waters of the black

bayous, dimly outlining the giant cypresses with their shroud-like draperies of Spanish moss. The native silence and gloom and mystery of the great swamp was but intensified by that sound of howling or hooting that rose and fell with the night breeze, and gradually grew louder as they went forward.

"Put out the light," directed Dennard at last. "They mustn't see it. We're in the creek now and I can find the rest o' the way in the dark."

As he threw the torch into the water, Julian observed a perceptible current, and inquiring in a whisper, was told that the Chickasawhatchee Creek, on its course toward the Flint River in the open country, flowed past the larger island. As a bend of the stream was rounded ten minutes later, they saw the light of camp-fires some distance on and shortly after could distinguish the rapid movement of numerous human figures within the circle of light, the shrill shouting being meanwhile

kept up. Unquestionably a numerous company was encamped on the island.

"You stay here with the canoe while I slip up on 'em and take a look," whispered Dennard, as they glided up to the base of a sloping bank. "You'd better paddle over there behind them bushes and wait," he added before stepping guardedly ashore. "Don't show yourself until you hear me whistle like a partridge (the quail was the bird he thus mistakenly called), and don't git oneasy if I'm gone long; it may take me a good while."

Though by no means anxious to venture into a hostile Indian camp, Julian scarcely relished the inactive rôle assigned to him. But the wisdom of the plan was evident, and he made no objection. To leave the canoe unguarded was to hazard the loss of their only means of escape. It could be hauled ashore and hidden in the brush, to be sure, but the effort required to launch it again would involve serious inconvenience should a hasty retreat become necessary.

So with a parting whisper, "Be careful, Dan," the boy paddled backward behind the screen of some tall rushes, grasped an overhanging branch, and held the canoe at anchor. It was the first time he had called the trapper by his Christian name, though he had been invited to do so. From the first their friendship had developed rapidly and the present adventure served to draw them still nearer together. Besides, the difference in their ages was not as great as it appeared. Though a giant in stature, the fair-haired Dan was only twenty-two.

While Julian waited, full of impatience and apprehension, wondering what the continued yelling in the supposed Indian camp could mean, Dan was stealthily drawing near the scene of the tumult, moving slowly and hugging the cover of the trees and brush. The larger island, like the smaller one, appeared to be rimmed by a hammock growth of trees and dense underbrush, and as long as he remained within such limits he would be safe

from observation, provided no sentinels were stationed in the vicinity, but in the comparatively open pine woods beyond he must run greater risk.

No sooner had he reached the inner borders of the hammock than it was clear to Dan that a considerable band of Indians was encamped on the island. No less than twenty cloth tents were distinguished from where he stood, while others no doubt had place in the dim perspective beyond. In an open space near the probable centre of the encampment upward of fifty Indian warriors were dancing around a lofty upright pole, brandishing knives and hatchets and uttering blood-curdling yells.

Having learned that the marauding Creeks were indeed established on the island, and further, judging from their antics, that they were on the war path, most men would have turned back and hurried to the outer world with the news, especially as it was dangerous to go on. But Dan Dennard had not seen

enough to satisfy him. Look where he would, he could detect no sign of any one on the watch, and was led to conclude that sentinels were not stationed on this inward shore of the island, no attack from the deep water side being feared. Emboldened by this, and urged on by youthful curiosity and the desire to learn as nearly as possible the exact strength of the enemy, he took the risk and pushed forward, now walking bent double in the shadow of a pine, now creeping on hands and knees through the wire-grass or broomsedge.

In this way he drew near enough to view the whole encampment, and to conclude from the condition of the leaves and branches lying about that the Indians had been on the spot for twenty-four hours if not longer. In addition to several brush shelters thatched with palmetto fans, he counted thirty-six cloth tents and estimated that the encampment contained no less than three hundred persons, including squaws and children. The great number of horses and mules which he saw

confined within a roped inclosure also proved that the band was a large one.

The number of the Indians gave the self-appointed scout less concern than did the manifest and startling evidence that war was already begun. The antics of the half-naked creatures, as they shrieked and danced round the pole near the centre of the camp, might have provoked a pitying smile, had not certain hairy objects hanging from the pole itself been the unmistakable source of all this wild night revelry. It required only a glance, on reaching a favorable point of vantage, to convince Dan that these objects were human scalps. They were nine in all, and the deepest horror and wrath were stirred in him on observing that the hair of three of them was long, indicating that not even women had been spared.

The squaws also took part in this barbarous festivity, not joining in the dance, but standing about in animated groups, now laughing, now screeching, now swaying their bodies

back and forth in time to the monotonous music of a native drum, a kind of squeaky flute or pipe, and a tom-tom, or species of tambourine. Some of the warriors who danced, as well as the attendant musicians, were provided with dried gourds in which were pebbles, and the harsh rattle of these added to the inharmonious din. The Creeks of that day were in some ways more civilized than the average Indian tribe, but they were not above taking the scalps of women and children when on the war path, and gloating over the relics of such carnage in the scalp dance.

Having changed his base of observation several times and learned all he could as to the strength and equipment of the hostile band, Dan was about to turn and quit the dangerous neighborhood, when his attention was drawn to a commotion accompanied by loud shouts in that quarter of the camp farthest away from where he stood. Loath to go without learning the cause of all this, he

tarried until several horsemen were seen to ride within the circle of light about one of the more distant fires, where they were at once surrounded by a crowd of women and children who gesticulated excitedly and uttered cries of joy. The disturbance was so great that the attention of the dancers around the pole was drawn to it, and, apparently recognizing its cause, they left off their antics and rushed in a body to meet the newcomers.

It was at once clear to Dan that a second war party had returned from an expedition beyond the borders of the swamp probably bringing fresh trophies to be hung on the pole. He counted six warriors astride of as many horses, all wet and muddy from their recent passage through a portion of the submerged swamp. In their midst rode a seventh person who at first appeared to be a white boy, but as the party advanced into stronger light the face and figure of a young girl were recognized. Instead of or in addition to scalps, this party evidently brought a

captive. The triumphant cries of the squaws, as they surrounded the prisoner's horse, gabbling to each other and doubtless reviling the victim, left no room for doubt.

At once a wild plan of lying in the woods until the camp was hushed in sleep and then attempting the rescue of the unfortunate young woman began to take shape in Dan's mind. She was too far away for him to see anything familiar in her face and he concluded that she was a person unknown to him, doubtless captured on the far side of the swamp. This, however, in no way influenced him, and when he gave up the plan of immediate rescue, it was only because he thought it was his first duty to hasten beyond the borders of the swamp and warn all persons of their great danger, especially the inmates of Cyrus Keswick's house.

As soon, therefore, as the captive was assisted from her horse and led by two squaws into a neighboring tent, and he had carefully noted the position of this tent, Dan began his

retreat. He had heard stories of white captives burned at the stake in past times, but believed that no harm would be done the young woman before next day; and by that time he confidently expected to guide a party of soldiers to the rescue. So it was without great anxiety on her account that he now crept away through the grass and bushes toward the hammock growth. Once there, he walked erect and as rapidly as possible toward the point where the canoe had been left, with little fear of encountering sentinels.

It seemed to the imaginative Julian that hours passed while he anxiously awaited Dan's return. He almost believed he was never again to hear anything but those monotonous cries coming from the camp, the mournful sweep of the wind through the pines, and the occasional hooting of an owl. When at last, the promised whistle of a quail was heard, it was so like the cry of the wary bird itself that the boy wondered if his friend could really have uttered it. Never-

theless he promptly let go of the overhanging branch, and as the canoe glided out from cover he saw Dan's upright figure at the water's edge.

The moment he stepped aboard Julian began to question him, but Dan remained silent until they were a long way up the creek and out of harm's way. Arriving at the point where the more open water of the stream had to be abandoned for the tortuous trail by jungle and winding bayou, a torch was again necessary, and while the boy cut some shavings of resinous pine and struck fire with a flint and steel, Dan told his story.

"There's two or three runaway niggers in the camp," he concluded, "and I reckon they must 'a' showed the Injuns in to Big Island." He thought that otherwise, being strangers in the region, they would hardly have known that so safe a retreat was at hand. Clearly they had established themselves there until the whites, thinking them departed for Florida, could be taken by surprise, or the

better to resist the force expected to be sent in pursuit of them; and it was probable that the recent scalp-hunting expedition of a detachment of the band was not approved of by the older and wiser heads.

However this might be, Dan and Julian were alike eager to carry the news to the Keswick farm and the canoe was pushed forward with all possible speed, the boy meanwhile kneeling in the bow and holding aloft the torch, the better to afford them light and make sure of the uncertain landmarks of their course.

## CHAPTER IV

### GRIEF AT THE KESWICK FARM

THE Keswick farm was nearer the southeastern borders of the Chickasawhatchee than any other, its back clearing being not more than two miles from the outskirts of the swamp. Nevertheless it escaped the Indian raid, the band having issued forth from the southwestern side and attacked the settlements nearest that point.

The result of this raid, according to an account in "White's Historical Collections of Georgia," was the killing of "a gentleman whose name we have forgotten, with his wife and three children, also Mr. William Hicks and a Mr. Padget and his two children." The account further states that the Indians retired into "the Chickasawhatchee swamp and took possession of an island in the middle of it, where they

prepared to defend themselves against any attack which might be made by the whites."

Such was the terrifying news that reached the Keswick farm on the evening of June 27, 1836. Mr. Cyrus Keswick, who had done good service in the war of the Revolution and in several struggles with the Creek Indians later on, was now a rather feeble old man of seventy-three. All his children were married and settled at a distance, his wife was dead, and his only companions on the lonely frontier farm were his adopted niece, Maggie, and about a dozen negro slaves. Only six hundred acres of his extensive tract of land were cleared, and on these were cultivated cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, sugar-cane and upland rice. His dwelling, furnished in the simple and primitive style of the time and place, was the old-fashioned double-pen log house with a wide, open hallway running through the centre, a long piazza across the front, and a couple of "shed rooms" in the rear.

Mr. Keswick had eaten a belated supper and seated himself on the front piazza to enjoy a pipe, but the fragrant, home-raised tobacco failed to yield the usual measure of comfort. He was just now the only white person on the place, and though this was by no means unusual or annoying, to-night the old man felt uneasy and depressed. His visiting nephew Julian, having finally wheedled permission, was gone, as has been told, on an excursion into the Chickasawhatchee with Dan Dennard, and his niece and housekeeper Maggie was supposed to be at a neighboring farm. The boy was not expected before the following day, and his absence, though it made the house seem lonely, was no occasion for alarm. But Maggie had ridden away for a visit of only a few hours, intending to return before night, and now it was nearly nine o'clock.

"That tobacco ain't what it used to be," muttered the old man, grumblingly, as he rose to walk through the "entry." Halting

near the steps of the back porch, he called several times, and a negro presently approached from an outhouse. "Jesse," he then said in an anxious way, "git on a horse and ride over to Mich' Hightower's. If Maggie aims to stay all night, all right; I jes' want to know. That may be what's the matter, but somehow I'm dreadful oneasy to-night."

The negro hurried to the horse-lot and five minutes later took the road. Meanwhile the old planter reseated himself on the front piazza and resumed his pipe. The night was clear, calm and warm. A whippoorwill sounded its monotonous call from a neighboring grove and was answered by another at a greater distance. Anon these hushed their cries or flitted beyond hearing, and only the occasional hooting of a distant owl broke the deep silence. The lonely old man felt glad to think that the cabins of his household servants and field hands were within call.

It was nearer ten o'clock than nine when

rapid hoof strokes were heard on the road leading up through the pine woods, and presently the outlines of two horses were visible near the gate. Mr. Keswick felt great relief at the thought that his niece was returning, attended by the faithful Jesse, until he recollected that the Hightower place was four miles distant and sufficient time had not elapsed. As the newcomers announced their arrival by a loud "Hello!" he rose from his chair and called out: "Who's that?"

"Dr. Foscue and Tommy Lumpkin."

"Hitch and come in, boys," invited Mr. Keswick, wondering at the lateness of the visit, but glad of the arrival. Two men were now seen hurriedly walking up the path to the house.

"We've come to tell you the news," said the foremost, leaping up the steps, a thin, bearded man of thirty, at once recognized as the doctor.

"Where's Miss Maggie and Julian? You-all better be in a hurry," panted the other, a

much younger man whose voice indicated great excitement.

"What's all this, boys?" asked Mr. Keswick, noting that both carried rifles.

"The Indians are here! They killed Hicks and Padget and his two children and the whole Todd family to-day," explained Dr. Foscue.

"Great Master! And—and Todd's ain't more'n three miles from Hightower's!" exclaimed Mr. Keswick, his upraised hands trembling violently. "Oh, Maggie, Maggie!"

The visitors demanded in a breath to know what this meant and soon learned. They were visibly alarmed, but Dr. Foscue took a hopeful view.

"From what I could hear in Newton," he said presently, "the massacre was over and done long before Maggie was anywhere near the neighborhood. Most likely the militia found her at Hightower's and sent her with the family to Newton. They wouldn't trust

her to ride over here by herself. Don't fret, Uncle Cyrus, I believe she's all right. The militia started out as soon as the news came, to take charge of the bodies and warn everybody to gather in to Newton as fast as possible. Any of 'em come this way yet?"

"No, this is the first news I've had. It's mighty strange nobody come over to tell us from Sessum's or Hightower's. They must 'a' know'd."

"I was afraid you might not get warning in time. So Tom agreed to come with me and let you know. We'd have come sooner, but I've been with a patient down on the Flint all day, and didn't get up to Newton and hear the news till night."

"They say Tom Carr recognized a chief who was in the raid up in Stewart," put in young Lumpkin, "and he thinks it's the same band. If it is, there ain't less than three hundred of 'em. The Baker militia is jubous about attackin' 'em before more troops

come. They're camped in the Chickasawhatchee."

Again Mr. Keswick uttered a cry of grief and made haste to tell them the present whereabouts of the boy Julian and Dan Dennard.

"It was mighty unfortunate they went in to-day," said Dr. Foscue. "They'll just have to take their chances. The only thing for you to do is to get ready right off and go back with us to Newton. Miss Maggie is there by now no doubt. Hurry and get your valuables together. We've got a good piece to go, and who knows but what the Indians may ——"

"I won't go until I know Maggie's all right," interrupted the grieving old man, with a stubborn air. "S'pose'n she was to come here after we left?"

The doctor insisted that there was not even the remotest likelihood of this and again urged haste. As for Julian and Dan, should they turn up, word could be left for them

with the negroes. No one thought of flight as necessary or even desirable for the latter, as they were in no danger from the Indians, except when found fighting in the ranks of the whites. Ever since the beginning of the century and before, it had been a common occurrence for runaway slaves to take refuge with the Creeks and Seminoles, and in some cases they had intermarried with members of the latter tribe, whose continuous policy it was in time of war to ravage the plantations and carry off the often not unwilling slaves.

Mr. Keswick was finally so far persuaded by the arguments of the doctor as to consent to call a negro and order a horse and buggy to be gotten in readiness. But he was loath to yield to the advice of the two young men, and, although he saw that they chafed at the delay, he purposely prolonged his preparations for departure. And so when Jesse galloped up at eleven o'clock, the party had not yet set out.

"She ain't dere," was the negro's answer to the questions put to him. "De Hightowers is all gone to town, but some de black folks still dere, and dey tole me Miss Maggie lef' dere 'bout five o'clock dis evenin', befo' anybody got de news 'bout de Injuns. She rid off by herself and de Injuns must 'a' got her, for nobody ain't seen her sence; and Isam he say he seen de Injuns cotch a white lady and carry her off late dis evenin'—Isam what b'long to de Sessum place. I stop by dere tonight on my way back. Isam was splittin' rails, he say, way off de road next de branch when he seen a young white lady come ridin' long by herself. He ain't had time to tell who she was, when lo and behold a whole passel o' Injuns jumpt out de bushes and grabbed her bridle and led her off in de woods, and she a-screamin'. Den Isam say he up and made tracks for home quick as he could. When I tole him 'bout Miss Maggie, he say if it wasn't her it was somebody pineblank like her. I reckon it must 'a' been Miss

Maggie, Mas' Cyrus," the negro concluded, sorrowfully.

Poor old Mr. Keswick broke down completely, bursting into tears and sobs as he collapsed into his chair. "Oh, Maggie, my child!" he groaned. "If I was only young and strong—if I was only the man I used to be——"

"There's plenty of us young and strong," interrupted Dr. Foscue, excitedly, "and we don't intend to be idle either. We'll have her out of that swamp to-morrow if we have to cut down every tree in it to find her."

"We'll get the militia to attack 'em right away," promised Tommy Lumpkin with a forced air of confidence, although, to judge from his agitated manner, it seemed doubtful if he could be counted on to take a hand himself.

"They'll feel compelled to do it if there's a man among 'em," added the doctor. "They won't wait for reinforcements, for that might take a week. Every able-bodied man in and

around Newton ought to agree to follow the militia into that swamp to-morrow."

Lumpkin proceeded to add the weight of his own predictions along the same line, but the doctor interrupted him to urge an immediate departure.

"Don't fret, Uncle Cyrus; we'll save her," he promised. "All we can do now is to get to Newton as fast as horses can carry us. We'll have a heap to do before morning, for the militia won't start for the swamp later than sun-up if I can help it."

Mr. Keswick had grown calmer as he listened, and he now gave his last orders to Jesse and through him to the other hands. Then he caught up a bundle and announced that he was ready to start.

At this moment a dog began to bark in the yard, steps were shortly heard on the piazza, Dan and Julian appeared in the doorway, walked into the room and dropped wearily into the nearest seats.

## CHAPTER V

### TO THE RESCUE

GREAT was the surprise of all and unbounded the satisfaction of Mr. Keswick, who relapsed into a chair, and calling Julian to him, patted the boy affectionately on the back. So great was his delight that he chuckled audibly, for the moment losing sight of the fate of poor Maggie.

"The red rascals didn't ketch you after all, then, Julian?" he exclaimed.

"Did you see any signs of the Indians in the swamp?" Dr. Foscue meanwhile inquired of the panting Dan.

"Let alone signs, I saw a camp of two or three hundred of 'em," was the answer. "That's why we come out to-night in such a hurry—to give warnin'." Dan's story was told in the briefest possible way, the interjections of the others meanwhile conveying to

his mind the main facts of the Indian raid. "They've got a white woman on the island," he concluded. "They brung her in late while I was watchin' 'em."

"And to think it's my little Maggie!" groaned Mr. Keswick.

Dan uttered a single exclamation of horror, and then as they explained to him he remained motionless and dumb, a look of fiery determination in his eyes. Dr. Foscue now announced that they must be moving and recommended the young trapper to borrow a horse, accompany them to town, and make one of the party of rescue expected to start early next day. Mr. Keswick meanwhile rose to go, telling Julian that they would ride together in the buggy. Dan did not rise and merely crossed one of his huge legs over the other.

"I ain't a-goin' to Newton to-night," he said in response to glances of astonishment. "I aim to go straight back in that swamp. You all know what for, I reckon. Who'll go

with me?" He looked hard at Dr. Foscue, who seemed a little nervous under such scrutiny. "Will you, Dr. Jim?"

"Not I, Dan," was the prompt answer. "I don't think I'm a coward, and I believe I'm ready to fight for Maggie as long as anybody, but there's a limit to what a man can do. I believe in reason. No use going wild. The thing for us three men to do is to join the militia and march into that swamp to-morrow."

"The militia ain't strong enough and they know it," replied Dan. "They'll wait for help, if it takes a week. If forty men march in that swamp to-morrow, as likely as not the last one o' their scalps will hang from that pole by night."

"And yet you want me to go in there to-night with just you!"

"That's the p'int," was the cool reply. "The only chance is to slip in on the sly. I know what tent they put her in and if I had one good man to go with me and keep watch

in the canoe while I sneaked in the camp, I believe we'd stand a good chance o' havin' Miss Maggie safe before mornin'. But Dr. Jim won't go. Will you go, Tommy?"

Young Lumpkin was visibly agitated as he faced the eye of the questioner. He stood on one foot and then on the other, as he answered in a shaken voice, borrowing from the doctor:

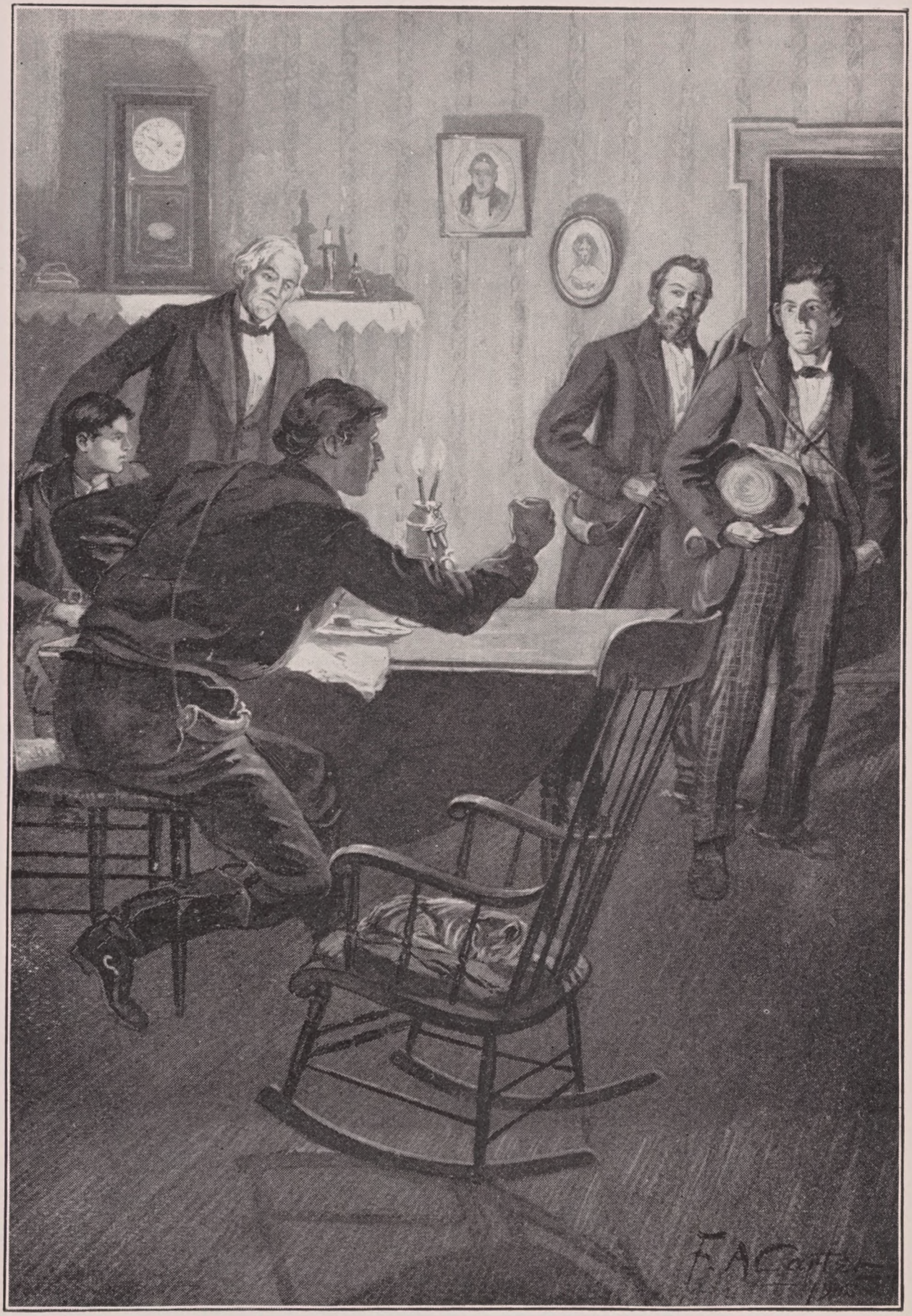
"It ain't reason. I believe in reason. No use goin' wild."

At this moment, as the result of some accident, a puppy ran yelping into the room, the same that Miss Maggie had nicknamed "Tommy." Giving it a vigorous shove with his foot, Julian sent it howling out into the entry, then whispered to Dan:

"That kick was meant for its namesake."

"I believe in reason," repeated Tommy Lumpkin, uneasily.

"So you won't go either? Then I'll go by my lone self," said Dan, bringing his fist down with great force on a table near him.



"THEN I'LL GO BY MYSELF"

"All right, then. I hope you won't be sorry. Discretion is the better part of valor, my lad," said the doctor.

Dan made no reply. Convinced that argument was useless, Dr. Foscue turned away and marched out to mount his horse, followed by Lumpkin. Julian was now seen writing rapidly with a pencil on a sheet of paper lying on the sitting-room table, apparently giving no further heed to what was going on.

"It's easy to see who cares the most for Maggie," said Mr. Keswick softly, as he and the young trapper left the house together. "But be careful, my boy; be careful, Dan."

"I will," was the assurance. "I believe in 'reason' as much as the rest of 'em for that matter. Good-night, Mr. Keswick."

As soon as they were outside the gate Dan turned off to the left and walked hurriedly along a path through the pine woods. In his unusual preoccupation he had forgotten to say a parting word to his young comrade of the evening's adventures. Sad at heart and

somewhat bewildered by all that had happened, Mr. Keswick also forgot Julian, walking on to the hitching-post without observing the boy's absence. But as the old man was assisted into the buggy by Jesse, the others, who had long since mounted, asked impatiently for Julian. It was supposed that he was collecting a few articles of clothing, or some of his more precious belongings against the possibility of the house being looted by the Creeks, and Jesse was sent in haste to summon him. The negro returned shortly, torch in hand, but without the lad.

"He gone," said Jesse with a wondering air. "He ain't in de house nowheres. But I found dis yuh on de table."

Mr. Keswick took the sheet of paper that was handed to him, and holding it up in the light of the torch, read the following:

"DEAR UNCLE CYRUS:

"I am going with Dan. I didn't say anything to you about it because I knew you would not like it. Dan doesn't know it

either. Somebody has got to go to keep watch in the canoe and nobody else is willing. Good-bye, and don't mind. Cousin Maggie and all of us will see you in Newton by to-morrow night.

"Your nephew,
"JULIAN."

The venturesome boy's calm confidence awakened no responsive echo in his distressed old uncle, who uttered a groan and looked helplessly at Dr. Foscue. "Run after him, Jesse, and bring him back," he exclaimed after a moment.

"Dunno which way he gone," said the negro, hesitating. "He ain't gwine let you ketch him—he too sharp, you see him so."

"Jesse is right," said the doctor impatiently. "The boy will have to take the consequences, though that wild fellow Dan is really to blame. We can't spend the night on a wild goose chase after Julian."

"The Lord protect him and Maggie," groaned Mr. Keswick, and the party set forward.

Having written his note and made sure that it would be seen by those who came to look for him, Julian caught up his rifle and quietly left the house by the back way. A few minutes later he leaped over a rail fence at the bottom of a field and hurried through a stretch of open pine woods until he reached a path evidently familiar to him. Then, having looked to right and left and listened, he sat down on a log to wait, confident that the short cut and his haste combined had brought him to the spot before Dan could have passed.

Scarcely three minutes later a heavy tread was heard on the path and the outlines of the tall young trapper's figure were seen. He walked forward incautiously and as Julian rose up, he started backward and covered the boy with his rifle.

"Don't shoot," laughed Julian; "it's not an Indian this time."

"What are you doin' here?"

"I'm going with you."

"The mischief you are!"

The boy then told how he had slipped away leaving a note behind. "I want to save Cousin Maggie as much as you do," he added earnestly, "and I'm goin' to go with you and help. I'm only a boy, but I believe you'd rather have me than Tommy Lumpkin any day."

"You're right, I would, Julian. Tommy ain't worth the powder and shot it would take to kill him. But I'm afraid the job is too risky for a young un like you, though you ain't as scary as some men I know."

"I am fifteen," said the boy proudly.

"Yes, but you had better go back, Julian."

"And walk to Newton by myself? No, sir. They're gone by now. The Indians can't catch me if I stay in the canoe."

Dan was silent a few moments, considering what to do. "It's a big responsibility to carry a boy on such a trip," he said at last, "but Miss Maggie's got to be taken away from them red imps and I need somebody to watch the canoe. If you're set on it, Julian, come

along. But you must stay in the canoe. You mustn't put your foot on that island."

"Let's hurry, then," said Julian, avoiding a direct promise. Though a brave lad, he was far from desiring to court more risk than was necessary; but, not knowing what might happen, he wished to be free to act according to circumstances.

It was now a little past midnight and time was precious. Without more ado, therefore, they made straight for the swamp. Dan would have liked to visit his farm before going into the Chickasawhatchee again in order to leave directions and make some disposition of his valuables against a possible Indian raid, but he felt that it was out of the question. Luckily he had no mother or sister to be anxious about. He lived almost alone in his little clearing, without other companionship than that of a free negro who helped to farm the land and received in payment a just share of the crops. The negro's wife looked after the affairs of the young landlord's house and

cooked his meals. These two had little to fear from the Indians and could be left to take care of themselves.

Thirty-five minutes of rapid walking brought the two adventurers to the borders of the swamp, where they halted to light a torch before penetrating the jungle. In that dense growth of trees their light could not be seen from afar and was not a source of danger. At any rate, without it they would inevitably go astray. The canoe being found undisturbed at the edge of the black, sluggish bayou, they got afloat without delay. The torch was now more than ever a necessity, a boat-path being more easily lost in the night than a trail by land.

Once, in choosing from no less than three dimly-seen openings among the trees ahead, Dan did go astray and nearly an hour was lost before he felt assured of being on the right track again. And once it was found necessary to go out of their course in order to avoid a possible encounter with some fierce wild

animal. They saw the sheen of its glaring eyes among thick branches beneath which their course led, and as the canoe drew nearer, the creature uttered a threatening growl.

"It's a wild cat or a panther," whispered Dan. "If we paddle under there and it's a panther, as likely as not it'll jump on us. We don't want to shoot if we can help it, and we've got no time to waste on a fight anyhow."

So they departed from their course, even at the risk of losing the trail, and thus more time was lost. It was nearly three o'clock when they finally came out in the open creek current and Julian was told to extinguish the light. The darkness that then surrounded them was intense. After a few minutes the outlines of trees and water became a little more clear, but Dan soon realized that since they entered the swamp the sky had become overcast with clouds. However, he contrived to keep his bearings and make headway. In no great while they saw a dark rise of land

before them and knew that Big Island was reached.

The Indian encampment was now dark and quiet. Not a fire burned and not a sound disturbed the hush resting upon swamp and island. Julian thought the camp must have been deserted, but Dan was not deceived. He knew that the Indians felt secure in the strength of their position and now lay in the deep sleep of the darkest hours before dawn. It was, therefore, the best of all times for the execution of his daring scheme.

Advising Julian to paddle over into the bushes again and remain concealed until he heard, as before, the cry of a quail, the brave young man stepped ashore and disappeared.

# CHAPTER VI

## RETREAT CUT OFF

The intense darkness resulting from the clouded sky was a mixed advantage. While furnishing the obscurity desirable for Dan's operations, it also surrounded him with unseen dangers that a little more light might have revealed. On approaching the borders of the camp he was every moment afraid of stumbling upon a sentinel and betraying his presence, but he continued to draw nearer without encountering any such dangers as he feared.

Except for the occasional bark of a dog on the farther side, fully an eighth of a mile distant, the encampment seemed as quiet as the grave. Whenever this sound was heard Dan stopped short in his tracks, full of apprehension. What he feared most of all was that he would be scented out and exposed by the

Indians' dogs. He would have breathed more freely had he known that every dog belonging to the camp was tied up, for a reason that will be explained later.

The ghostly outlines of several of the tents were seen as if in a mist, and Dan was gradually approaching the spot whence he counted on locating that one into which Maggie had been conducted, when an unforeseen accident occurred. As he crawled forward on hands and knees, dragging his rifle softly beside him, he drew near what in the darkness he took to be a clump of bushes, and behind which he expected to stand erect and look well about him before going on. Great was his astonishment when the supposed bushes suddenly broke away with a frightened snort, and he saw the form of an Indian pony that had been left out to graze, snapping the cord that bound it and dashing madly away through the encampment, a small bell, evidently attached to its neck, ringing out with frightful distinctness.

Running backward some fifty feet, in a twinkling Dan dropped into cover between a clump of fan-palmettoes and a fallen pine. It was soon evident that many in the camp were awakened. Lights appeared and voices were heard. The pony was captured and the bell stilled. Then a party of several Creek warriors approached the spot where the animal had taken fright, but luckily for Dan they were not accompanied by a dog and did not trouble themselves with a careful examination of the ground. They evidently concluded that the bell-pony had been startled by some prowling beast that could do no harm, and soon retraced their steps, quelling the alarm in the camp.

Ten minutes later every light had again been extinguished and all was quiet, but Dan lay still fully an hour, not daring to proceed until well assured that slumber once more reigned in the camp. This enforced delay was the most trying part of his night's work, for he was weary and in sore need of sleep.

It did not trouble him to keep awake and watchful while active, but his present passive rôle was positive torture. He now found it necessary to keep his hands and feet in motion almost constantly in order to remain awake and on the alert.

He hoped that at least one good result, the awakening of Maggie, might come of the unfortunate accident. Once roused, a person in her trying position would not readily fall asleep. While thinking of this, Dan observed that the skies were partially clearing, and neighboring landmarks were soon more distinctly visible. Standing erect, he now located the position of Maggie's tent and began guardedly to make his way thither, screened by clumps of bushes.

A few minutes later he had crawled up within fifteen feet of the tent itself and lay hesitating in a patch of long grass or broomsedge behind it. The tent was one of a long row reaching away in dim perspective on either hand, and was large enough to accom-

modate three or four persons. Dan knew, therefore, that Maggie was not alone. She was probably guarded by two or more Indian squaws, but being a white woman and considered helpless, she probably had not been tied. Nevertheless a warrior might be on guard at the door.

To satisfy himself on this point, Dan made a stealthy circuit of the tent, prepared to spring upon the foe and throttle him at any moment, but he found the way clear. Applying his ear to the narrow opening between the curtains, he distinctly heard the breathing of several sleepers. What to do next was difficult to determine. To enter in quest of Maggie would be the height of rashness. It would no doubt rouse all the women at once, and in a minute the whole camp would be brought about his ears by their cries. Nevertheless he must act without delay. The growing light in the eastern sky warned him that day would soon dawn.

Returning to his former position in the

sedge a few feet behind the tent, Dan sank on his knees and uttered twice or thrice the cry of a quail. He thought this ought to attract Maggie's attention, supposing her to be awake; for one day not long since she was present while Julian was being taught to make the sound. Also because, if wide awake, she would be likely to regard the cry as an imitation. The wary quail does indeed "roost" in the grass on the ground at night, but far away from all human kind, nothing being so improbable as that it should choose its bed in the vicinity of a large encampment.

A minute passed without response of any kind, and Dan began to fear that after all Maggie was asleep, or incapable of moving on account of bonds, or that the cry had not attracted her notice. He had again uttered the three notes of the quail's whistle, and was about to take the risk of calling softly the girl's name, when he saw the figure of a woman stealing around the tent.

"Over this way!" he exclaimed in a loud

whisper, the moment he was convinced that the figure was not that of a squaw. He was prompt to show himself by rising to his feet, and Maggie Keswick hastened to his side.

"Oh, it's you?" she said, peering into his face. "I thought it was Julian that whistled. What on earth made you take all this risk for me by yourself? You'll get killed."

"Come along quick—no time to talk," said Dan, seizing her hand and drawing her after him.

"They didn't tie me," whispered Maggie a moment later, "and if it hadn't been here in the swamp I would have been out of that tent long ago. The two old squaws slept like logs. One was layin' across the door and I had to step over her. That's why I was so slow comin'."

"Tell me about it after we git to the canoe," again cautioned Dan.

He led the way rapidly into the bushes, thinking to avoid the borders of the camp along which he had crawled while searching

for the captive's tent. In this way he unknowingly approached the roped inclosure which contained the horses, and, as he darted around a tall clump of palmettoes, he found himself face to face with the upright figure of a Creek warrior. He was not a sentinel, it was clear, for he had no rifle ; concern for the horses had probably brought him out of his tent so early. His surprise was even more complete than Dan's and for an instant he stood motionless ; but as the latter leaped forward, he started backward, drawing a knife.

Profiting by the Indian's momentary stupefaction, Dan managed to seize him by the throat and check his involuntary shout of alarm. After that there was no time for a warning cry to be uttered, and the question of physical strength alone remained to decide the issue of mortal combat. The Indian was wrapped in a blanket, but as he recoiled, it fell to the ground, leaving him naked to the waist. This placed Dan at a disadvantage in the struggle, but he counted on his probable

superiority in strength. He had dropped his rifle at the outset, not daring to shoot and alarm the camp; his plan was to throttle or stun his foe. But, though gasping for breath and not likely to endure long the iron grip on his wind-pipe, the Indian had a knife in his hand and the outcome of the struggle was exceedingly doubtful.

After the first few strides Dan had relinquished Maggie's hand, and as he darted round the clump of palmettoes she was a few steps behind. She appeared on the scene just in time to see the struggling figures of the two men fall heavily to the ground apparently locked in each other's arms.

"Hurry on to the canoe!" Dan found breath to say, as he marked her approach from the tail of his eye, forgetting that the place where Julian awaited them was unknown to her.

But the girl would have remained on the spot in any case until the issue of the struggle was known. Her foot struck upon the fallen

rifle and she promptly picked it up and held herself in readiness to use it, looking around for other enemies. Fortunately none appeared. All her attention was then centered on the struggle going on in the darkness almost at her feet. She longed to give Dan aid, but knew not how. She listened to the tearing of the grass beneath the bodies of the struggling men, the cracking of their joints, the heavy breathing of one, the strangling gasps of the other, and grew cold with fear that her rescuer might not win.

In great dread she stepped nearer, clutching the rifle and stooping over the two writhing figures. Every moment the dawning light had grown stronger, and she now clearly saw that Dan was uppermost, his left hand grasping the wrist of the Indian's that held the knife and the fingers of his right buried in the red man's throat. She also saw that the unfortunate Creek warrior was literally being strangled. The struggle was soon over. Dan shook himself free, his huge figure rose,

and the Indian remained stretched on the ground.

"Lucky for me he wasn't as strong as he mought 'a' been," the young man panted.

The dawning light was sufficient now to outline the clustering tents behind them and doubtless the encampment would soon be alive with the newly-awakened. The chances of a safe retreat to the canoe were lessened each moment. Catching up the Indian's blanket, Dan threw it over Maggie's shoulders, for she was thinly clothed and shivered in the cool morning air. Then bidding her follow, he hurried forward, bending his body almost double as he went and keeping a sharp lookout on either hand.

After making the desired circuit, dodging in and out among the clumps of palmettoes dotting the open pine woods, they presently gained the hammock growth without having as yet attracted attention from the camp. A few minutes of rapid walking then brought them to the margin of the water where Dan

had disembarked, and, having uttered the quail whistle softly, the young man seated himself wearily on a log.

"I'm plumb wore out, Miss Maggie," he said, and, looking up, felt gratified to see the friendliest of smiles on her face. "Soon's I get you over to Little Island you'll be all right, and then I can take time to breathe," he added.

It was now almost broad daylight and objects on the island behind them, as well as in the flooded swamp before them, were clearly visible at some distance.

"I never killed a man in a fight before," Dan continued, after whistling again, a little louder. "It ain't what you might call fun, but I had to do it for you, Miss Maggie."

"Nobody can blame you," the girl answered gently, shuddering as a vision of the Indian's dying face passed before her mind.

"They started it," he went on. "They got nine of our scalps yistiddy, besides stealin' you."

"Hush!" said Maggie suddenly.

Cries of lamentation and yells of rage were heard from the direction of the camp. No doubt the escape of the prisoner had been discovered and possibly the body of the Indian.

"Let 'em yell," chuckled Dan. "They can't ketch us without a canoe, and that they ain't got, from all I could see."

"But where's our canoe?"

Dan abruptly bounded to his feet, anxiety succeeding his calm confidence. The possibility of an accident to Julian, snugly hidden with the canoe in the bushes, had not occurred to him till now. In the vicinity of the proposed place of concealment, no living thing met his gaze but an alligator that floated lazily half out of the water. The canoe was nowhere to be seen and no answer came to the signal, though repeated again and again, each time more loudly. Dan hazarded the conjecture that the boy, weary of waiting, had paddled a short way up the creek for the

sake of amusement, but Maggie was sure that Julian could not be guilty of such frivolity when so much was at stake. She thought that he had either been captured or that some unaccountable accident had happened to him. As they discussed the question, they became suddenly aware that the cries at the camp had ceased.

"The Injuns 'll be hot on our trail in less than five minutes," said Dan, looking about him fiercely, "and we've got to be movin'. No use waitin' here for that boy. All we can do is to hurry along the shore o' the island and try to git where it's shallow enough to wade out before they ketch us. It's shallow enough round on t'other side. That'll be hard and nasty work for you, Miss Maggie, but it's better than to git caught."

"Go ahead; I'm not afraid of mud and water," answered the girl stoutly, though her face had turned pale.

No further time was wasted in discussion. Though trembling with excitement and fear,

it was not without a feeling of confidence and security that Maggie breathlessly followed in the footsteps of her guide, as with great rapidity and without noise he made his way forward through the hammock growth, keeping always near the water's edge.

## CHAPTER VII

### JULIAN OUTWITS THE ENEMY

According to the plan agreed on, as soon as Dan leaped ashore, Julian paddled behind a screen of trees and bushes about a hundred yards away, and laying hold of an overhanging branch, he held the canoe at anchor. For fully an hour he remained alert, listening for sounds from the direction of the camp and forecasting Dan's possible adventures. His position alone there in the dark swamp, with danger perhaps lurking on every hand, as well as his sense of responsibility, tended to keep him wakeful.

But, having been either on the tramp or boating ever since noon of the previous day, he was now greatly fagged, and it was no wonder that at last drowsiness began to torture him and he persuaded himself that he might with safety lie down in the bottom

of the canoe. Not to sleep—oh no!—but only in order to secure greater comfort for his weary limbs. The result was inevitable. Within a short time after his change of position he lay fast asleep, still holding on mechanically to the anchoring branch. Had this status remained unchanged, all might yet have been well, for daylight and Dan's whistles combined would doubtless have roused him. But ere long an exciting dream caused him to turn over, throw his arms about him and groan. Thus the anchoring branch was let go and the canoe slowly drifted away with the current of the creek.

When Julian awoke it was morning. For a few moments he lay still in drowsy ecstasy, listening to the sweet notes of a wood-thrush and the cheerful chirping of several brown swamp-sparrows that fluttered from perch to perch within a short distance of the canoe. But as full wakefulness succeeded the first state of drowsy torpor, the boy opened wide his eyes and suddenly sat up in the canoe, a

prey to wild conjectures and bitter regrets.

He understood at once that the canoe had drifted away with the current, and had been carried, it was impossible to tell how far before it lodged in its present position in a growth of rushes on the borders of the creek. Behind him was the submerged swamp stretching away indefinitely. In front of him was a screen of low bushes, beyond that the slow-moving water of the drowned creek, and beyond that again a rising ground free of water and covered with a varied forest growth, evidently another part of the island shore. A second glance showed the boy a narrow point of land running out from the main shore for more than a hundred yards into the swamp, causing the creek to diverge from its course in order to sweep around it. The land on this point was low and covered for the most part with a dense growth of non-bearing swamp huckleberry bushes. The width of the open creek being only a matter

of a few feet and its course winding, it seemed likely that the canoe had not floated far before lodging in its present place.

It might be worth while, then, to push out and paddle up to the old position on the chance of being yet in time. Supposing his plans had succeeded, Dan had undoubtedly returned sometime ere this; but might he not still be squatting in the bushes, whistling now and again like a quail and watching anxiously for the belated canoe? Tortured by self-accusations and harried by varying conjectures, Julian was on the point of working the canoe out into the open water when his attention was arrested by the sound of a breaking twig in the woods on the shore.

A moment later he saw two human figures emerge into a little open space and he instantly recognized Dan and Maggie. Their mouths were open and they seemed to pant, as if they had been traveling with great speed, and the former seemed to be urging the latter to hurry forward while he halted a

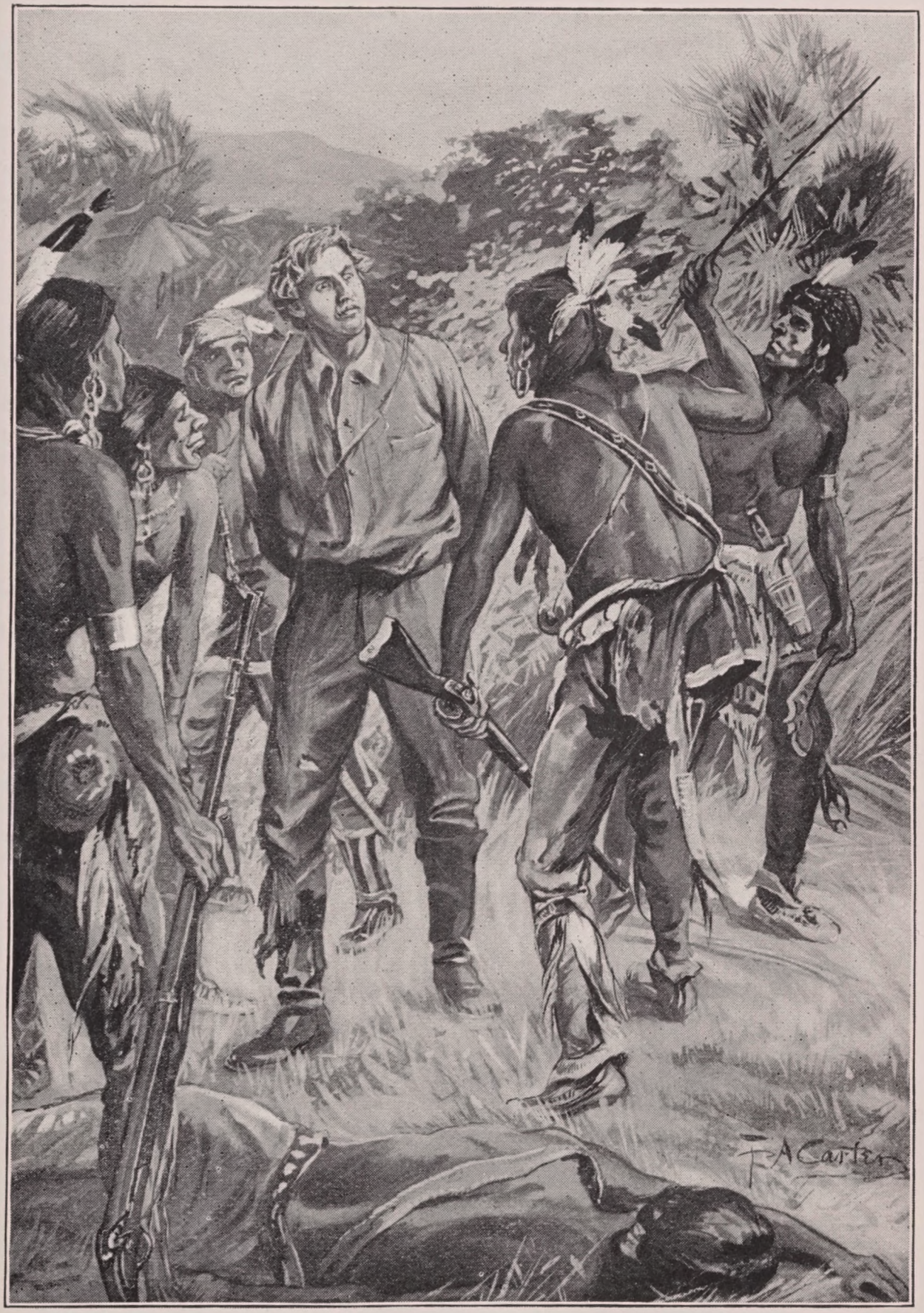
few moments to listen for the sound of pursuers on their track. Great was the boy's delight at this unexpected good fortune, and nothing but a vivid recollection of the gravity of the situation prevented him from shouting aloud to his friends. He was in the act of showing himself above the sedge and uttering the familiar whistle when a harsh interruption drowned the sound of his half-uttered signal.

Maggie had hardly disappeared in the brush on the farther side of the open space when, with fierce yells, eight or ten Creek warriors leaped into view from different quarters and Dan was surrounded. With a glow of pride but with intense anxiety, Julian saw that his friend did not tamely submit. Though surprised and entrapped, he threw his rifle quickly to his shoulder, fired, and one of the Indians fell flat on his face. Then, in spite of the absolute hopelessness of it all, the desperate young man wielded his weapon like a flail, and succeeded in knocking down and dis-

abling two more of his enemies before some four or five others were able to seize his arms and legs and, after a fierce struggle, bear him down. To take him alive was clearly their determination, for though all were armed, not one of the Indians aimed a weapon at him.

Meanwhile poor Julian was in terrible distress, doubtful what was his duty in the case. He had at first seized his rifle with manly resolution, thinking to aid Dan by picking off an Indian from where he knelt in the canoe; but so quickly was his friend surrounded and involved among the struggling figures that he failed to shoot for obvious reasons, and after a moment's reflection he concluded that it would be better not to show himself at present.

It was just before Dan was dragged to the earth, that glancing aside, Julian saw Maggie running among the trees, pursued by two Indians. Descending the slope, she ran out on the point of land, not observing in her fright and haste that she had gone into a trap. But her pursuers were quick to take note of




THE INDIANS STOOD AROUND HIM EXULTANTLY

this fact, and slackened their speed. They knew that she could escape from her present position only by retracing her steps and passing within a few feet of where they stood. So sure were they of their game, in fact, that their attention returned to the struggle going on in the open and they made bold to move backward a few steps in order to witness the issue.

Having secured their gigantic prize to the satisfaction of even the most cautious, tying his arms behind him with stout cords of twisted deer hide, all the Indians except the one who was shot and the two who were disabled, stood round him in a circle, exulting over him and reviling him. Indeed several of them were not content without beating him over the head with their ramrods. Most of them knew a little English, and many taunting remarks that the prisoner could understand, and to which he did not reply, were made, such as:

"Big white snake crawl in camp while

Indian sleep, eh? Steal little white fawn, eh? White snake t'ink he wise, t'ink Indian fool, wait till Indian put him in fire—see if white snake know to crawl out fire, too."

It was while all this was going on that Julian resolved upon a bold action. The spot where Maggie had crouched down on the point of land was not fifty yards from the canoe and, after working his way out of the reeds, Julian saw that he needed to paddle across only a few feet of open water in order to double the point and pass out of the line of the Indians' vision. Upon trial he found that the sedge offered less resistance than he had expected, but he foresaw that the waving motion imparted to it might attract attention even if no noise should be made. However, he did not hesitate. Working the canoe out of the flags, he dipped his paddle deftly, shooting across the open water and doubling the point apparently without being observed, for no cry of alarm was raised.

Had not the attention of the Indians been so entirely taken up with their prisoner, the boy's attempt would have failed. Even as it was, one of the Creek warriors who divided his attention between the group in the open and the outlet from the point of land, caught the faint sound of an incautious dip of the paddle and glanced searchingly and suspiciously out over the swamp an instant after the canoe passed round the point.

Julian was not obliged to land. He had no sooner doubled the point than he saw Maggie crouching among the bushes only a few feet from the water's edge, and, what was equally fortunate, she saw him at once. Beckoning to her and indicating by appropriate motions that she should not speak, the boy ran the canoe up to a fallen tree that projected a few feet from the shore. Comprehending that he wished to leave no trace of either the canoe or her footprints in the bare yielding earth at the water's edge, Maggie stepped on the log where it issued from the undergrowth

and walked forward with cautiously bent body until she was enabled to drop gently into the canoe.

Having witnessed the triumphant issue of the struggle in the open, Maggie's two pursuers appeared to conclude that it was time to secure captive number two, for they began to advance out on the point of land. Two minutes later they appeared at the log where the girl had embarked, a disappointed, puzzled look on their faces. After beating the bush all over the point, they arrived at its terminus only to find that, after all, the game was not run to earth, little dreaming that a few seconds before a canoe had disappeared behind a low tussock perhaps a hundred yards out in the flooded swamp.

Had the fugitive drowned herself or attempted the dangerous and all but impossible feat of swimming out through the submerged forest, crowded as it was with every conceivable obstruction? Neither conjecture brought satisfaction. The two bewildered warriors

were shortly joined by three others and a consultation was held.

Meanwhile Maggie lay panting in the bottom of the canoe on the Indian blanket and Julian, resting on his knees, peeped guardedly through the bushes and swamp-grasses growing on the tussock, and kept a watch on the Indians in council.

"They're going away," the boy whispered presently. "The two that followed you look sheepish and the others look mad. I reckon they've decided that while they watched the fight, you slipped by 'em and ran on through the woods."

"And what about Dan?" asked Maggie in a low voice.

"I can't see the place from here. I reckon they must be carryin' him to the camp by this time."

Here Maggie broke down and for some time struggled vainly with her tears. "Just to think," she moaned, "that after what he did

for me all by his lone self, here they've gone and caught him!"

"It's better for Dan to be the prisoner than you, because you're a woman," said Julian.

"It is not," protested Maggie. "They wouldn't 'a' killed me, but they'll kill him right straight."

"But one of the young chiefs would have married you. Dan said so."

"No, he wouldn't!" cried Maggie, angrily, "I'd like to see the nasty, good-for-nothin' thing try it. I'd scratch his eyes out."

"Hush!" warned Julian, anxiously, though half inclined to smile; for as the disgusted girl sat up in the canoe and glared about her, she looked quite capable of carrying out her threat.

Her wide straw hat had fallen off and her dark red, curling hair hung loosely about her shoulders. Her figured calico dress was splashed with mud and her keen gray eyes were dimmed with tears. Nevertheless it was to be seen at a glance that she had a pretty,

winning face. Training and more refined surroundings might have done much for Maggie Keswick. Though sixteen years old, she had had little or no education. More or less roughly brought up on a Southern frontier farm, she was a wild, self-willed, but attractive child of nature.

"It makes me feel so mean to think that Dan got caught and I got off safe," continued Maggie, with more angry tears.

"If you feel mean, how do you reckon I feel?"

"Oh, that puts me in mind. Why weren't you there with the canoe when Dan whistled?"

"I went to sleep and drifted down the creek."

"Well, Julian Curtis, if that doesn't beat all! You ought to be thrashed."

Julian wanted to say, "I couldn't help it," but resisted the impulse as weak and unworthy, and endured the girl's wrathful and accusing glances in silence.

"Well, I reckon you were tired out and couldn't help it, po' child," said Maggie presently, softening.

"I deserve to be called a 'child,'" answered the boy, profoundly dejected, "but I hope I won't act like one again."

"Well, what are you goin' to do now?"

"Get away from here as fast as I can."

For fifteen minutes now, though constantly on the lookout, he had seen no signs of the Indians. It was likely that they were hurrying through the woods along the main shore, believing themselves in chase of Maggie; but it was also likely that, unable to find her trail, some of them would return to the point in the course of an hour and make further investigations. Now was the time to escape. On leaving the shelter of the tussock, the canoe would be in view from the shore, but only while crossing a few yards of comparatively open water. After that it would be lost among the crowding trees and black reaches of stagnant water. Prog-

ress would be slow, but a circuit could gradually be made and they could finally reënter the open creek above the island.

"Lie down again," urged Julian, as he lifted the paddle and began to push the canoe out into open water. "If there are any Indians on the watch, they needn't see you even if they do see me."

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN UNSATISFACTORY VOYAGE

MAGGIE promptly obeyed, but as soon as she knew they were screened from view she again sat up in the canoe and bade the boy halt until she had decided what she ought to do. She declared that it was a "perfect shame" for them to "sneak away like two cowards" and leave brave Dan to his fate. She seemed to forget that it had been her habit to speak of him lightly as "the scary trapper." She ventured the suggestion that they ought to wait and watch in the neighborhood until there was a chance to aid his escape.

"I've a great mind to go ashore and walk into that camp and tell 'em if they harm a hair of his head, all the soldiers in Georgia'll march in here and wipe the last one of 'em off the face of the earth," she declared.

Julian thought this would do no good, and would only result in two captives instead of one. "We can't do anything," he added. "You're only a girl and ——"

"And you're only a child."

"Child or not," he answered hotly, "you'll see that after I've taken you home to Uncle Cyrus, I'll come back in here with the men. If I were alone, I'd try to help Dan, but I know Uncle Cyrus would say I ought to get you out of this scrape first, and that's what I'm going to do, too. I wouldn't put you on shore if you told me to, so that settles it!"

Maggie was forced to acknowledge that this "child" was not without spirit, and it might be she would have to yield to his dictation whether she wished to or not. It was well perhaps that the discussion went no further. At this juncture a suggestive sound, like the plunging of a heavy body into the water, came to them from the direction of the point of land, and all other considerations were lost sight of in the excitement of the moment

and a quickened desire to make good their retreat. What the sound meant they could only conjecture, but there seemed little doubt that the Indians suspected how they had been outwitted and were determined to investigate. They had no canoe, but doubtless some of the hardy Creek warriors would be willing to swim out into the submerged swamp, regardless of moccasins, alligators, and the danger of becoming entangled in the water plants and mosses, in order to follow and recapture the daring fugitive.

"We've got the start and they can't catch up with us, I think, unless we get stuck," said Julian in a low voice, as they listened for further sounds. "But it won't do to stay around here any longer."

Thereupon he strained hard in order to force the canoe more rapidly forward, while Maggie who sat facing him, scanned the open swamp vistas behind them, dreading every moment lest she should see the head of a swimming Indian. But in choosing the best

route the canoe was turned rapidly from right to left, the backward view being thus frequently cut off, and if there were any pursuers on their track they were not seen, nor were any further sounds heard. In the course of the extended circuit which finally brought them into the open creek above the southeastern extremity of the island, where observation from the shore was no longer feared, Maggie gave the questioning boy the details of her capture.

The Indians had done her no violence, merely surrounding her, seizing her bridle and leading her rapidly away from the road into a dense swampy hammock, where she soon realized that her screams were a useless waste of energy. So far as she could tell, she had ridden about eight miles in their company before the island was reached the same night. During the first half of the journey they seemed to be skirting the Chickasawhatchee, after which they boldly entered it by torchlight and traveled several miles through

mud, water and jungle, the horses sometimes sinking to their saddle girths in the slime, necessitating the lifting of Maggie's foot from the stirrup and the catching up of her skirts. Before and after arriving at the camp the Creek warriors treated her with respect and consideration, only the squaws seeming disposed to address her in harsh language. Some of the latter looked as if they would like to claw her with their long nails, she said.

"I reckon that means there was a young chief in the party that caught you who wants to marry you," said Julian. "Don't you know he'd like to skin me alive!"

"Skin him alive!" cried Maggie furiously.

"Maybe they killed Mrs. Todd because she was too old and her little girls because they were too young," speculated the boy. "Yes, they must have wanted you for a squaw. Dan said there didn't seem to be as many women in the camp as men."

They had now entered the open creek, the

island being no longer in view, and Julian paddled the canoe steadily upward against the sluggish current. It was not long before they reached the point where the boy believed Dan had turned off to the right, and they were presently making their way slowly through the flooded swamp toward the smaller island. It may have been an hour later when the toiling boy stopped paddling and gazed about him in great perplexity. Confused by the many openings among the trees ahead, more than once he had not been sure that he chose the right one; now he knew beyond question that he had gone astray, for Little Island should have been reached long since and there was still nothing in view but the apparently interminable swamp.

Without a word to alarm his unsuspecting companion, Julian brought the canoe around and attempted to retrace his course back to the creek, trusting that, once there, he would soon regain his bearings. But at the expira-

tion of another hour and after much hard work, the creek had not as yet been discovered and was apparently no nearer than when he turned to go back. It was now past ten o'clock in the morning and poor Julian was not only weary of his labors but painfully hungry. As the canoe entered a small open expanse of water, fringed by almost impenetrable vegetation, he again lifted the paddle from the water and stared about him helplessly. The water of the little swamp lake appeared to be quite deep and was well stocked with fish of various kinds, to judge from the way they were "striking." It occurred to Julian that, though their escape from the swamp seemed doubtful, the way to a breakfast was not difficult. Reluctantly he now confessed that he was lost.

"I might 'a' told you so," snapped Maggie. "You wouldn't listen to me when I wanted to stay close to the island and try to help Dan. Such a big man as you had to have your own way and now this is what you've

got. We'll both starve, I reckon, and what's worse, if Dan gets loose the canoe won't be where he can get it."

Julian made no reply. He looked profoundly dejected as he unwound a fishing line and selected a large eel-worm from a supply that had been secured before entering the swamp on the previous day,—so dejected, indeed, that Maggie was prompt to repent of and make amends for her sharp speech.

"Never mind, boy, you've done your best," she said gently. "Maybe you'll find the way by and by."

"We've got to have something to eat before I try it again," said Julian, and applied himself to fishing with energy. "I wish we had one of those live turkeys," he added. "When we find the little island we must put them in the canoe. We can't tote 'em to Newton, but we can leave them in the edge of the swamp and stop to tell the negroes where to find them."

The patience of an Izaak Walton was not

needed on this occasion. The little lake in the interior of the great swamp had rarely if ever been fished, and its inexperienced inhabitants did not know the difference between a worm impaled on a treacherous hook and another more innocent. The boy soon had two fine black bass, each weighing at least two pounds, flapping about in the bottom of the boat. While Maggie was scaling them, he paddled over to a tussock at the farther side of the open water, collected some bits of dry wood and built a fire. The bass were then split in two and fairly well broiled on the coals. The lack of salt was a serious drawback to the flavor, but both Maggie and Julian ate heartily and afterward felt much better. They had stepped out on the tussock, a bush-grown circular mound some ten feet in diameter, in order to stretch their limbs as well as to cook and eat their breakfast, and at their approach, a moccasin snake that had been sunning itself there beat a hasty retreat down the opposite side and disappeared among

some dead branches lying along the dark water.

When the meal was finished, Julian tore down a great quantity of gray moss from the overhanging branches of a tree, arranged it in the bottom of the canoe and spread the Indian blanket over it.

"Now," he said to the young girl who looked on curiously, "I want you to lie down and rest yourself while I paddle around and see if I can't find the way out of this place."

"Julian, boy," said Maggie, touched by this attention, "the girl you marry when you grow up will be lucky,—you're so good and thoughtful."

Julian was not displeased at so pretty a compliment, but his responsibilities were just now too heavy to permit of his being puffed up. He had no sooner dipped the paddle and chosen his course than it passed from his anxious mind. Maggie did not at first accept his suggestion, but sat up and not only tried to assist him by her advice but laid hold of

passing trees or bushes whenever it was found difficult to urge the canoe forward. As the day advanced it grew warm, mosquitoes became troublesome and the boy found his labors more and more trying. Nevertheless he struggled bravely on, sometimes painfully despondent but never entirely without hope of at least finding his way to the outer world. He reflected that the swamp, though vast, was not endless. He did not know that, in the confusion of the winding passages ever leading forward before him, his sense of direction was no longer reliable and that for the most part he traveled in a circle, not recognizing old landmarks as he occasionally returned to them on account of the sameness of the swamp landscape.

Maggie several times proposed to change places with him and take her turn at the paddling, but Julian would not suffer it, and she finally succumbed to the effect of fatigue and the heat. Reclining on the comfortable couch prepared for her, she covered her face from

the light and soon fell asleep. The boy heartily wished that they were at home where he, too, might feel at liberty to lie down; but the sight of his cousin asleep and defenseless, added to his sense of responsibility, and he struggled on, with all the energy of the dawning manhood in him, through the silent winding reaches of the great Chickasawhatchee.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when he saw light breaking through the trees ahead, and pressing forward, soon reached a comparatively open place whence he could see the high and dry land of a rolling pine ridge. He thought at first that he had arrived at the limits of the swamp; then it struck him that the high land was out of character, for, so far as his experience went, the woods bordering on the Chickasawhatchee, were always flat and swampy. Besides, he recollected to have heard Dan say that a part of Big Island was comparatively hilly. Though doubtful what he ought to do, he continued to send the canoe slowly forward,

and presently the sound of an axe fell upon his ear.

Gliding forward more cautiously then, from the screen of one clump of swamp brush to that of another, the canoe was shortly in a position from which Julian could see whence the sound came. About three hundred yards up the slope from the water's edge two negroes were engaged in cutting a large pine tree. No sight could have been more welcome, for the boy at once leaped to the conclusion that the limits of the swamp had now at last been reached. The two black men must of course belong to some neighboring farm and had come down to the borders of the Chickasawhatchee in order to cut what was probably a bee tree. Paddling boldly forward, Julian beached the canoe sidewise and stepped ashore.

Then it suddenly occurred to him that Dan had seen run-away negroes in the Indian camp, and he ducked down behind a clump of bushes and peered anxiously forth. Evi-

dently he had not been seen, for the two negroes did not halt in their work. So far, then, all was well, and there was nothing to prevent his creeping forward for some distance, leaving the canoe where it was. Maggie still slept, and the boy now erred on the side of tenderness. He thought it a pity to rouse her and he took the risk of leaving her uninformed of his intentions, confidently expecting to find her still asleep when he returned a few minutes later.

But hardly had Julian disappeared in the bushes when Maggie opened her eyes with a start and stared at the open sky above her. Wondering that she no longer heard the dip of the paddle, she called the boy's name. Receiving no answer, she sat up and looked around her in alarm. Then it was that the stroke of the axes attracted her attention. Standing up in the canoe, she promptly located the two negroes and arrived at the same conclusion first reached by Julian.

Unluckily she did not know of the pres-

ence of runaway negroes in the Indian camp, nor did the high ground awaken any suspicion that this might not after all be the outer limit of the Chickasawhatchee. She was convinced that their swamp-wanderings were now over, and that the delighted boy, though not now in view, had rushed forward to question the tree-cutters. With exultant feelings of relief and with perfect confidence, therefore, she stepped ashore and walked boldly up the slope.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE "WATER LILY" AND THE BEE TREE

THE two negro men were dressed in well worn homespun shirts and tattered trousers, and stood on either side of the pine industriously wielding their axes, each stroke being accompanied by a loud grunt which apparently did duty as a safety-valve for a surplus of energy. They were so absorbed in their labors that they remained ignorant of Maggie's approach until she was within a few feet of them. Then they lowered their axes and stared at her in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Why, if it ain't Mr. Hightower's Joe!" exclaimed Maggie, her eyes fastened on the younger of the two men. "Why, Joe, I thought you'd done run away too long to talk about."

"Yes'm, Miss Maggie, I did sort o' run

away," stammered the young negro who was known in the vicinity of the Chickasawhatchee as "Hightower's Joe."

"What'd you do it for? Did they thrash you?"

"No'm, it wan't dat. I jes' got tired o' so much ploughin' and hoein' and put in to do a little huntin' and fishin'," was answered, with a grin.

"And then you got tired of that and went home and let 'em put you to work again, eh?"

"Who, me?" ejaculated the negro, astonished.

"How far is it to Mr. Hightower's?" continued Maggie.

"A fur ways."

"What are you doin' here, then?"

"Cuttin' dis bee tree."

"Ain't this Mr. Hightower's land?"

"Shew!" ejaculated the other negro, "dis is 'way in de swamp. How come you in yuh and don' know you in yuh? Dis de big

islant, where de Injuns is," said Hightower's Joe.

Maggie comprehended her unfortunate situation at once, and even in the first moments of terror, found the calmness to be glad that she had not begun by inquiring for Julian. Thus the boy's presence had not been betrayed and he might escape even though she were again taken prisoner. She understood now that Julian had left her only for a few minutes and had wisely taken advantage of the palmetto and gallberry brush in order to make his observations unseen, while she had foolishly walked openly into the enemy's camp. The camp itself was not in view,—as far as the eye could reach, nothing met her gaze but the rolling pine ridge; nevertheless she was in the power of these two black confederates of the red men. Her first impulse was to cut and run for the canoe, but she rejected it as unwise, conscious that it would be easy for the negroes to intercept her flight if they chose, and thinking they would most

likely do so in order to gain favor with their allies.

The frightened girl turned pale, drew in her breath with a gasp, and after a moment's trembling and hesitation, struggled to compose herself. "Do you know the way out of the swamp, Joe?" she asked, in an unsteady voice.

"You mighty right I do."

Maggie then eagerly made a proposition to the two negroes, wisely deciding to withhold all mention of Julian or the canoe until convinced of their willingness to do as she wished. She told them if they would lead her out of the swamp and put her on the road to her uncle's place, she would give them her gold earrings and breastpin and at some later day send them five dollars each in money. The two men opened their eyes wide, evidently attracted by the offer, but the elder promptly shook his head.

"Injuns kill us," he said. "Injuns watchin' us over yawnder."

"Dem Injun don't like work, you see 'em so," supplemented Hightower's Joe, grinning. "A whole passel o' 'em lazin' roun' on de grass smokin' dey pipe in de shade t'other side dat clump o' permeters over yawnder, and soon's we git de bee tree cut, dey'll up and come eat de honey."

Maggie was wondering what these runaways gained by exchanging one form of slavery for another when suddenly she beheld three Indians carrying rifles emerge from the screen of a large clump of palmettoes some two hundred yards up the slope. Except for a feathery headdress, they were naked to the waist and their red-brown bodies glistened in the sun. Brown deerskin trousers covered their nether limbs. They walked leisurely forward, probably intending to find out why the axes had ceased to ring. In the terror that now overtook her, Maggie's every feeling was merged into the one absorbing instinct that prompted flight.

As she turned round and darted down the

slope like a startled hare, the negroes shouted to her that it was useless to run. But run she did, straining every nerve to increase her speed. The three Indians were quick to see her and set out in hot pursuit. She had a good start, was fleet of foot, and, provided she did not trip and fall, the chances were that she would reach the canoe and embark before she could be overtaken. She did, in fact, arrive a hundred yards in advance of her pursuers, and paused an instant to look around for Julian who was nowhere to be seen.

Pained and bewildered at this, but confiding in the hope that the boy was hidden from view and would not be taken, Maggie stepped into the canoe, dropped on her knees, seized the paddle and pushed off from the land. Luckily she had had some little experience in the management of the canoe. Fortune also favored her in that the swamp water at this point, was comparatively open and free of impediments for some little distance from

shore. The canoe was fully fifty yards away when the foremost of the pursuers reached the water's edge and called out to the fugitive to stop. Glancing over her shoulder, Maggie saw three Creek warriors standing on the shore, several others running down the slope and the two negroes still leaning on their axes at the bee tree.

"White girl, come back—Indian shoot," called out one of the warriors from the water's edge.

Far from obeying, Maggie strained every nerve to send the canoe on, hoping to run in behind a screen of swamp bushes before the threat was made good. A moment later all her pulses leaped at the crack of a rifle and she noted in great fear that the bullet had buried itself in the thwart of the canoe two feet in front of her. She did not dream that the Indian had missed his mark purposely, intending only to frighten her into surrender; and she gave herself up for lost. Nevertheless she continued to paddle des-

perately, and the canoe shot behind cover just as another bullet whistled over her head. A moment later she heard the splash of two separate bodies as they came in contact with the water and knew that her pursuers were about to swim into the swamp after her. Pausing for one anxious look about her, she chose the apparently most promising opening among the trees ahead and paddled frantically toward it.

Maggie's pluck had compelled the Indians to resort to a disagreeable expedient. They saw that they must either shoot her, allow her to escape, or swim into the swamp and overtake her. The first was against express orders, the second was not to be suffered, and the third was therefore necessary. Armed only with their knives, two young warriors leaped into the stagnant water, and by wading, swimming and avoiding as far as possible submerged obstructions such as fallen trees, they made good headway in the wake of the fugitive.

With a clear field poor Maggie might now have really escaped. As it was, the difficulties were too great. As the canoe shot through the opening ahead, and with a deft sweep of the paddle was turned into a winding avenue to the right, the bow ran upon a submerged cypress "knee" and hung fast. With uncommon quickness of resource, the girl stood up, squatted half down and stood erect again several times, imparting a motion to the canoe that under ordinary circumstances would have loosened it from the unseen snag, but in the present case failed to do so. Maggie then resumed her seat, dipped the paddle again, and was attempting to get off by backing water, when she saw the head of an Indian appear around the bend, followed almost at once by another.

She now saw that further effort was useless, for her enemies were within thirty feet and the canoe still fast. She lifted the paddle out of the water and sat still, watching the swimmers, the threatening look of a hunted animal

at bay, in her eyes. As the foremost Indian drew near, she recognized his face as that of the young chief whose raiding party had captured her on the previous afternoon. This added fuel to the fire of her rage, and as he put out his hand to grasp the gunwale, she lifted the paddle as if to strike and cried out fiercely, as though addressing some persistent dog come barking at her heels:

"Go 'way!"

Her sudden threatening attitude caused the young chief to shy off for the moment, and he involuntarily threw his right hand out on a small bush-grown tussock to the right of him. An instant later he withdrew it with a start and a pained contraction of the muscles of his face, and hearing a rustling, Maggie looked where his hand had been in time to see a moccasin gliding out of sight behind the tussock. Though it was her enemy who had been bitten, the girl shrank from the spectacle and was moved by involuntary pity. In fact, so occupied was she with the horror of it that

the movements of the other Indian passed unnoticed until she felt the canoe sway violently and looked round to see him climbing aboard.

Now that her case was hopeless, the girl's unusual strength and courage forsook her. Even her anger and pride could not prevent great hot tears from starting in her eyes and trickling down her cheeks. The Indian who had climbed into the canoe, looked at her admiringly and muttered something to the effect that the white maiden showed a brave spirit, but she was not touched by the compliment and turned her face scornfully away.

The canoe was promptly dislodged from the "knee," by the aid of the young chief who was still in the water, and was soon gliding rapidly back to shore. Maggie noted that the latter, though bitten by a moccasin, made no complaint; as soon as he was seated in the canoe, he merely proceeded to enlarge the wound with his knife and squeeze out the blood. As they passed a miry tussock, he caught up a handful of mud and applied it to

the wound, and later he pulled up a pond-lily bush, bruised the root with the handle of his knife and applied this likewise, the mud being first washed away. And after all this he appeared to dismiss further anxiety from his mind.

The three passengers in the canoe were received with admiring glances and words of applause by the five Indians awaiting them on shore. The very mud and green slime adhering to the buckskin trousers of the two prompt and devoted young Creeks were looked upon with envy, and it was plain enough to Maggie that she was regarded as an extraordinary young girl. The mystery of her disappearance from the point of land that morning seemed now cleared up, much to the satisfaction of all. It was supposed that Dan, on landing in the night, had left his canoe at the point of the little peninsula, and while he was engaged in the fight, the girl had eluded her pursuers by possessing herself of it and paddling away. Evidently she had

lost her way in the swamp and wandered about all day, finally, in ignorance of her whereabouts, landing on the north shore of the island.

The captive was now led up the slope to the vicinity of the bee tree, which fell with a crash just after they arrived. The two negroes immediately located the hollow, cut into it, and after scattering the angry bees by means of the thick smoke from bits of burning cotton cloth, proceeded to fill several buckets with the dark layers of wild honeycomb. The indolent Creek warriors meanwhile stood well out of range, never once offering to lend a hand. However, each of them condescended to exert himself to the extent of selecting a large piece of the honeycomb which was eaten with grunts of satisfaction and brief exclamations of approval. A tempting piece was also offered Maggie by the young chief who had twice been responsible for her capture, but although painfully hungry, she rejected it in proud disdain. An-

other Indian of more advanced age likewise invited her to eat.

"Chum-pee good, much good," he said, and then added in his broken English that Shil-o-fo-haw, the Water Lily, was unwise to refuse so good a gift as this luscious wild honey. By unanimous consent the girl had been promptly named the "Water Lily," probably both on account of her fair face, and because pond-lilies grew in all the open spaces of the swamp where she was captured.

The operation of robbing the wild bee-hive being completed, the Indians set forward across the backbone of the island, with Maggie walking in their midst and followed by the negroes loaded with the buckets of honey. But before they had marched half a mile they suddenly came to a halt, and a consultation was held in the Creek tongue. Their speeches were wholly unintelligible to Maggie, but Hightower's Joe who wished to learn the language listened intently, catching a familiar word here and there. He marked the fre-

quent repetition of the word "bith-low" and soon understood their purpose of sending back for the canoe in order to transport it to camp and launch it in the neighboring creek, such transportation being thought easier than a toilsome voyage around through the swamp.

Three young braves were accordingly appointed for this task, who, being of nearly equal height, could readily carry the canoe on their shoulders. The selection was no sooner made than the two parties separated, the larger going forward and the smaller leisurely retracing their steps. Both parties walked boldly across the open spaces with little of that wariness of manner characteristic of the Indian when in an enemy's country, and this was of course because of their confidence in the security of their position, confidence that had been in nowise weakened by Dan Dennard's daring and single handed attempt to rescue Maggie.

But after the three young warriors had

walked leisurely past the fallen bee tree and reached the water's edge, suddenly as by a common impulse, they darted into the cover of the nearest bushes. No enemy appeared in view or fired on them from ambush, but they simultaneously made a bewildering discovery. The canoe had dissappeared.

# CHAPTER X

## A TRYING NIGHT

JULIAN had stepped boldly and confidently ashore, as has been told, but, on recollecting what Dan had said about the presence of runaway negroes in the Indian camp, he made haste to conceal himself. As he approached the vicinity of the bee tree, every few moments he raised his head above the bushes and looked about him warily. The lay of the land and the necessity of keeping a screen of brush between himself and those he wished to spy upon, caused the boy to approach by a roundabout way, and he had not gone more than half the distance when Maggie began to walk boldly up the slope.

Some three minutes later, when the boy stole round a clump of palmettoes within fifty feet of the bee tree and peeped over the tops of some gallberry bushes, he was amazed

to see Maggie in conversation with the two negroes who were now leaning on their axes. A word or two reached him now and then, but he lost the sense of what passed between them. Maggie seemed to show no fear, however, and Julian had about concluded to walk boldly forward when, for some inexplicable reason, the girl turned round and ran down the slope. The pursuing Indians were not in the line of his vision, a tall clump of palmettoes intervening, and when the negroes called out to Maggie that it was useless to run, Julian at first thought she had taken fright without cause, and stood in his tracks irresolute.

And then, as he heard the sound of rapid footsteps, he began to realize the situation. A moment later the three foremost Indians were seen dashing past the bee tree. Had the boy understood sooner, he would have joined Maggie in her flight and the two might have gotten off together, the former, however, running the risk of being shot before the cover

of the swamp was reached. But now the enemy was between them and the opportunity gone. He would have run bravely to her assistance as it was, had he expected bodily injury to be done her, but the history of her first captivity was reassuring, and he decided to remain where he was, trusting to some future opportunity of effecting her rescue.

But when he witnessed Maggie's plucky behavior in the canoe and saw the Indian cover her with his rifle Julian aimed his own weapon at the supposed bloodthirsty warrior, heedless of what might be the result in his own case. Had he been a little quicker to act, his hiding-place would have been revealed; but just before he pulled the trigger, the Indian fired and the boy was quick to understand that the only object in view was to frighten Maggie and bring her to surrender. So he stayed his hand, ducked into the bushes again and kept quiet while the girl was chased into the swamp and brought back,

and while the honey was being taken from the bee tree.

As he squatted panting in the brush within fifty feet of the returning party of red men, fearing to move yet dreading to remain, two anxieties presented themselves. If the Indians had a dog with them, he would soon be scented out; and if the tree should fall in his direction, he might have to break from cover in order to escape a horrible death. His fate in the latter case was promptly decided. Hearing that unmistakable cracking, tearing sound indicating that the great tree was tottering on its base, the boy leaped to his feet in terror, and not until he saw clearly that it was falling in the opposite direction did he drop into cover again. His sudden movement caused a rustling of the gallberry bushes, and for quite ten seconds his head and shoulders were visible above them, but no one saw or heard him, all eyes being fixed upon the tree as it tottered, swayed forward slowly, then flew to meet the earth with a thundering roar.

It was a trying half hour that followed while the honey was taken from the hollow of the tree. The boy was sometimes afraid that his enemies would hear the very beating of his heart, and he often imagined that he heard a dog snuffing the grass only a few feet away. But as a matter of fact, no dog accompanied the party.

At length the Indians walked leisurely away from the neighborhood, and, raising his head above the bushes, the boy watched them until even the negroes, bringing up the rear, could no longer be seen. Then he started on a run for the canoe, but stopped suddenly, and, returning to the bee tree, gleaned a good handful of honeycomb before he was chased away by the bees. Two minutes later he was in the canoe, and had passed from view in the swamp sometime before the three young Indians sent back on a bootless errand appeared at the top of the ridge.

After paddling three or four hundred yards to a point where he was well screened from

view, Julian stopped to consider. It was now growing late in the afternoon, and there was not time to leave the swamp before night, even had he known the way out. The situation was now worse than it had been at any time since the kidnapping of Maggie on the previous afternoon, and poor Julian confessed that his carelessness and blundering were largely responsible. Both Dan and Maggie were now captives in the Indian camp, and the only person in a position at the present time to render them aid was a prisoner in the swamp.

What was to be done? Dreams of returning to shore at dark, of crossing the island guided by the light of the camp-fires, of watching and waiting until the still hours before dawn, and then attempting to rescue his two friends, for some time filled the boy's mind. At first he entertained them seriously and hopefully, then his enthusiasm slowly died out, and a great despondency overtook him. How was it possible for him to do what Dan

had done? Dan had known what tent Maggie was confined in, and how was he to ascertain this? The two prisoners would doubtless be housed in different parts of the camp; the one, if indeed he had not already been put to death, would be bound and guarded, and the other would be surrounded by squaws who, at the first approach of an intruder, would raise as great a hue and cry as a flock of angry geese. The difficulties were insurmountable.

In the midst of these despondent reflections the boy suddenly recalled a prayer taught him by his grandmother when he was five or six years old, in which were the words, "Have mercy on me, a feeble child." He had sternly resented it when Maggie called him a "child" that morning, but in his helplessness and misery now he humbly repeated the prayer, so amending it that protection was asked for Dan and Maggie as well as mercy for that "feeble child," himself.

This heartfelt appeal resulted almost at once in a measure of consolation, and slowly brought

about a revival of hope. But for the present, he decided that all he could do was to coast along the island southward at a safe distance from the shore, hoping to strike the creek near the point where Dan had disembarked before daylight that morning. Once there, provided he escaped observation and was not captured, by following the current he would undoubtedly reach the outer world in time, and could then walk across the country to Newton, and join the party with which Dr. Foscue had promised to invade the swamp.

With this in view, Julian lifted the paddle and sent the canoe forward. But he soon found that it was necessary to penetrate deeply into the swamp in order to find open waterway, and there was great danger of losing the island altogether, so tortuous and bewildering was the course required. Besides, it grew late and the dreaded prospect of spending a night in the swamp alone presented itself. However, he knew that it must be faced, the only alternative being to go back and land on

the island shore. He calculated that little more than an hour of daylight remained and determined to begin his preparations for the night at once by collecting moss as he moved forward in search of a camping place. The Indian blanket had been taken from the canoe by Maggie's captors and he must have other covering for the night.

Gliding into a little open pool some fifty feet in diameter and apparently quite deep, Julian put down the paddle and set to work to catch a fish for his supper. The honey satisfied his cravings for a time only, and he was now ravenously hungry.

The sight of an alligator's head which sunk out of sight at his approach, filled him with misgivings. Not that he feared the creature itself, for it is rare in Georgia swamps for an alligator voluntarily to attack any one; but Dan had told him that a "'gator hole" was poor fishing ground, for a simple and obvious reason. The boy was therefore not surprised when a half hour of earnest effort resulted in

the capture of only three small perch and a "cooter," or mud-terrapin, of which latter he could make no use. He saw that he must be content with a light supper, it being now too late to search for better fishing-ground. The boy thought regretfully of the opportunity to shoot a wild turkey that had presented itself an hour earlier and of which he had denied himself, fearing that the report of his rifle would reveal his whereabouts to the Indians.

By the time he had with some difficulty built a fire on a small tussock at the farther side of the pool, prepared the three little fishes and eaten them half cooked, it was growing dark. The question of how to spend the night now engaged his attention. The tussock was low and damp, and a great quantity of bark would have to be stripped from neighboring trees before a dry couch could be assured, and besides Julian knew that at least one moccasin was likely to haunt each of these tiny islets. Moreover, a sufficiency of dry wood to keep a fire going any length of

time was not to be had. He, therefore, decided to forego the luxury of a fire and sleep in the canoe, afloat on the pool as a safeguard against reptiles. It occurred to him as also highly desirable to keep the canoe in the centre of the sheet of water, as far away as possible from the dense encircling trees whose foliage might furnish an unseen base of attack for a vicious wild-cat or panther.

But how to cast anchor was the problem. In a rocky country it would be easy to tie a large stone to a line and drop it overboard, but this was quite impossible here. A cord long enough to stretch all the way across the pool would serve equally well, but whence was such a cord to be obtained? Upon investigation Julian found three fishing lines in the canoe, and when these were tied together the length was found sufficient to stretch from a low-hanging branch on one side of the pool to another almost directly opposite. This pieced line having been secured at both ends and drawn taut, the boy

pulled hand over hand to the desired point in the middle of the pool and easily attached the canoe by means of a piece of string.

Darkness had now settled upon the swamp and the outlines of the trees encircling the pool were blurred and indistinct. Thankful for the protection of the open and comparatively light space about him, the weary boy lay down in the canoe on a soft couch of the moss and covered his body with more of the same material. Extreme as was his fatigue, hours passed before he slept. Hunger made him wakeful, and anxiety for the welfare of his captive friends, weighed upon his mind. And although he felt that his position in the centre of the little lake was a reasonable safeguard against the attacks of wild animals, he found himself frequently lifting his head with a start and listening to strange sounds that came from the surrounding swamp, now as it were a harsh, unnatural croak, now a shrill scream, now a whining cry like that of an infant, and at long intervals, a strange

bellowing sound faint and far away, which he afterwards learned was made by alligators. The occasional hooting of an owl, though weird enough in these surroundings, was a relief from the other mysterious and fear-provoking voices of the great swamp. As he lay on his back, looking upward at the stars, the only lovely and reassuring feature in a world of gloom, Julian recalled his childhood's prayer and took comfort in repeating it often.

It must have been near midnight when he started up in the canoe and seized his rifle with trembling hands. The curious sound of infantile whining often heard in the distance, seemed to have come nearer and was now followed by the noise made by the leaping of a heavy body through the foliage of a tree on the borders of the pool. And just as Julian caught up his rifle, he saw two fiery eyes glaring forth from the blurred leafage. He quickly took aim and fired, the report suggesting the roar of a small cannon in the

stillness of the midnight swamp. The eyes then abruptly disappeared and afterwards all was still.

Julian hastened to reload, sat up a while looking about him watchfully, and finally lay down again. An hour later he was sleeping soundly. The sky overhead was bright when he awoke and the dawn was chasing the shadows from beneath the trees. Scanning the surface of the pool, he promptly located the heads of no less than four alligators resting lazily above water, but was not alarmed.

Loosening the canoe from its anchorage, he paddled to one end of the line and untied it. He then began winding the three connected fishing lines on a stick, meanwhile drawing the canoe gradually across the little lake. He had arrived within ten feet of the opposite shore, his task almost complete, and was listening with pleasure to the cheerful chirp of several brown swamp-sparrows that were hopping about, unabashed

by the more musical notes of a wood-pewee somewhere near, when a slight rustling in the foliage of the crowding trees in front of him arrested his attention.

At first he detected nothing to alarm him, and was about to go on winding in the line when he caught sight of a tail like that of an enormous cat nervously beating back and forth among the leaves in a manner startlingly suggestive of smothered anger. The boy remembered how Dan had said the day before that the tail of a panther was wont to move in that way when the beast was crouching for a spring, and involuntarily he caught up the paddle, dipped deep and backed water.

At almost the same instant, uttering a fierce snarling cry, the great cat tore through the branches surrounding her and descended through the air toward her prey. Lucky it was for Julian that he had the presence of mind to back water so promptly, for this alone saved him from the creature's powerful

claws. Instead of descending immediately upon the boy, the panther's body struck the water and only her forepaws grasped the bow of the canoe. Seeing that flight was impossible, Julian dropped the paddle, and leaning forward, caught up his rifle just as the furious beast crawled into the bow of the canoe and crouched for another spring. As he looked into the panther's burning eyes and tried to cock and aim his rifle, a benumbing paralysis seemed to lay fast hold upon poor Julian's limbs.

What followed was like a nightmare. The body of the great cat bounded forward, her hot breath blowing into the boy's white face; there was the rude shock of contact, a loud report, and Julian was thrown violently backward, his legs hooked over the thwart which alone saved him from being carried overboard. As for the panther, she seemed then to be leaping high in the air over his body, a part of his torn jacket in her claws; but as he regained an upright position, still grasp-



THE PANTHER'S FOREPAWS GRASPED THE CANOE

ing the rifle in his right hand, he was amazed to see her body lying crosswise of the canoe just in front of him, quivering in the throes of death.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GAUNTLET AND THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Dan Dennard, in bonds and with a rope around his neck, was led into the camp of the Creeks in charge of four Indians and followed by several others bearing the body of the warrior who had been shot in the struggle. The arrival of the party was the occasion of cries of lamentation as well as shouts of rejoicing. Death had now visited two Indian families through his agency, and Dan well knew that he need expect no mercy.

The party came to a halt under an oak tree near the centre of the camp. Such was their respect for the prisoner's prowess, that, although he was surrounded by scores of his enemies and escape was impossible, they still kept him in bonds. He was made to sit down with his back to the tree, to which he

was secured by a rope passed round his body. In the course of the succeeding hour nearly the whole camp, men, women and children, visited him there. Almost without exception the warriors eyed him admiringly and in perfect silence, but many of the squaws and boys hooted and reviled him, and the wives of the dead Indians had to be restrained from clawing his unprotected face with their long nails. They were, however, suffered to kick and spit upon him.

"Make these women let me alone," cried Dan indignantly to the warriors standing near. "I killed two o' your crowd in a fair fight, and if you aim to kill me to make up for it, do it; but don't let that old squaw stand there and spit on me. If you're men and not a passel o' cowards, you won't allow it."

This remonstrance, which was at once an appeal and a taunt, was understood by many of the bystanders and was not without effect. Both the hideous old squaw of Red Arrow

who had been strangled, and the less repulsive wife of Water Turtle who had been shot, were ordered off and the prisoner was left in peace.

Though deeply despondent, believing there was no hope of escaping torture and death, Dan nevertheless looked about him with some curiosity. His impressions of the night before as to the resources of the camp in numbers and outfit were more than confirmed. Just what fighting force could take the field against the whites in case of a battle, he could not definitely decide, more than one scouting or raiding party being doubtless absent; but he was prompt to conclude, from various indications, that three hundred souls was too small an estimate of the entire encampment. The warriors were all armed with rifles, knives, and tomahawks, and probably were well supplied with ammunition. It being now the breakfast hour, the prisoner had also opportunity to observe that the camp was in possession of ample stores of beef, bacon, corn-

meal and other provisions, doubtless taken from the farms on the route from Stewart County.

The tents were of circular wigwam pattern, but were made of the same stout cotton cloth employed by the whites. The Creek Indians of that day, from long contact with their white neighbors, had advanced beyond not a few of their primitive habits of life. The warriors for the most part still wore rings in their ears and feathers on their heads, went naked to the waist and grotesquely marked their breasts and faces with paint, but the squaws were all decently clothed in home-spun cotton or imported calico. It was evident that the leaders felt secure in the strength of their position and their numbers. As far as Dan could see, during that day and night, nobody remained on the watch. Certainly there were no restrictions as regards noises by day or the burning of fires by night. Children screamed, boys raced about, kicking at each other, wrestling, and shouting at the top

of their voices. The women and girls were as a rule, engaged in some useful employment, but the men, except such as were hunting deer on the island or those in the possible raiding parties beyond the borders of the swamp, were usually lolling lazily on the grass smoking their pipes, or squatting in circular groups playing a game of chance with their knives that suggested "stick-frog."

Of course Dan found leisure to observe all this only after the excitement occasioned by his arrival had subsided. He had been seated against the tree some two hours, and all the Indians had wandered off or gone about their affairs, when he noticed a young negro crossing an open space between two tents not far away, recognized Hightower's Joe, and beckoned him to approach.

"Sorry dey cotch you, boss," said the negro regretfully, as he drew near.

"What are you doin' here? Turned Injun, eh?"

"Who, me?" laughed Hightower's Joe.

"I gwine to Fluridy wid 'em, you see me so."

"Ain't a white master as good as a Injun?"

"No-suh-ree! White master keep me all time hoein' and ploughin'. Indian master le' me go huntin' and fishin'. De onlyest trouble is dey don't gim-me no biscuits and cabbage yuh in dis camp."

"Partic'lar 'bout your eatin', eh? You want a heap o' biscuits and cabbage and bacon and syrup and 'tatoes, let 'lone tobacco and whiskey?"

"You mighty right, boss!"

"Well, how'd you like to have money enough to buy all that and some gingercakes, too? How'd you like to make ten dollars?"

"Mighty well," was the prompt answer of the young negro who had opened wide his eyes and uncovered his glistening teeth.

"Well, then," continued Dan, lowering his voice, "if the Injuns keep me over night, you slip up and untie me about three o'clock to-morrow mornin'."

"All right, suh," was the ready promise. Several warriors were now seen approaching, and the negro began to move away. "We gwine out to cut a bee tree atter dinner," he called back. "I foun' it yistiddy myself."

Dan cherished little hope that the glib promise of Hightower's Joe would be kept. Could he act without detection, the negro would certainly do so in order to obtain the promised reward, indeed there was no reason to suppose that he would not be ready to act out of pure good nature and the promptings of human kindness; but it was equally certain that he would be willing to run no real risk, and the hazard was great at the best.

After being left in peace during more than two hours, sitting bound to the tree, Dan felt reasonably assured that no more violence would be done him until the hour of his execution, supposing he was to be condemned; but when at length he observed the forming of two long lines of men, women and boys, armed with sticks and long, tapering switches,

he knew that mischief was brewing, although never having heard of the custom with some Indian tribes of forcing a prisoner to run the gauntlet. The two parallel lines were about six feet apart and more than a hundred yards in length. The avenue between led to the doorway of one of the larger tents, in which, as Dan soon discovered, the chiefs and counselors had assembled. The prisoner took note of the fact that the stuffed skin of an eagle surmounted the entrance to this place, and he was equally surprised when later he learned that the feathers of the same proud bird composed the war flag of the tribe, not knowing that many generations before the Thirteen States won their independence and adopted their flag and ensign, the conquering Muscogee or Creek nation chose the American eagle as the emblem of its greatness and power.

As soon as preparations were complete, several warriors approached and led the prisoner to the entrance of the lane of torture.

His hands still tied behind his back, he was then shoved forward and comprehended that he was expected to make a dash for the council house or tent under a shower of blows. Rather than undergo it, he meditated breaking through the line and dashing for the woods, bound as he was. But, although boiling with anger, he soon recognized that this would only prolong his torture. For a dozen Indians stood behind him, and behind each of the men, women and boys in the lines, stood an armed warrior, equally prepared to enjoy the sport or to take a hand should the prisoner attempt to break away.

Undergo the ordeal he must, and Dan summoned all his strength of will to his support in order to endure it with manly fortitude. If his tormentors wanted to see him run and howl like a whipped hound, he was determined that they should be disappointed. And disappointed they were, although it was all the worse for the victim who received twice as many blows as he might have, had

he run the gauntlet in the usual way. While hooting in derision, almost every "buck," squaw or boy armed with a stick or switch, managed to inflict a blow on the back or head of the brave young man as he walked rapidly but with unchanging gait toward the council house. The result was pitiable. Already faint for want of food, further weakened by the growing intensity of his sufferings, and almost blinded by the blood streaming down his face, Dan at length staggered through the doorway of the council house and fell forward on the ground in a half unconscious condition.

Six chiefs were assembled here, in addition to eight old men councilors. The latter were seated on straw mats against the opposite sides of the tent, the former on tanned skins in a circle about the centre of the inclosure. The inner side of these skins was turned up and on each was painted in crude outlines and colors, the totemic or family badge, or crest, of the owner, as a bear, an alligator, a wolf or a

bird. For in this expedition were represented six of the original sub-tribes or families of the Creek nation. The miko, or head chief, was Pretty Crow of the noble Kunipalgi or skunk family, and the under chiefs were Black Hawk of the Halpadalgi or alligator tribe, Red Leaf of the Nokosalgi or bear tribe, Big Owl of the Fusualgi or bird tribe, Little Cloud of the Wotkalgi or raccoon tribe, and Swamp Fox of the Yahalgi or wolf tribe.

Brawny warriors were they all, and the fiercest, stoutest and ugliest was unquestionably the miko, Pretty Crow, or "Billy Buster" as he was called by the whites at the trading towns on the Chattahoochee. The old men were content with decorations in the shape of wampum belts and necklaces of bear claws, but the young chiefs wore also feathers and earrings, and were painted in all the colors of the rainbow. None of them took any notice of the prisoner as he stumbled into the lodge and lay helpless on the ground, but as his failing powers revived Dan knew that

they were taking council of each other as to what should be his fate, although he could not understand a word.

The discussion lasted nearly an hour, in the course of which each of the old men as well as each of the chiefs found something to say. Some spoke with anger and excitement, but others were calm and deliberate, which led the captive to believe that the more hot-headed demanded his instant death while the prudent perhaps advised that he be kept alive for the sake of effecting an exchange in case any chief or valuable warrior should be taken by the whites in a future battle. That different opinions were expressed was perfectly clear. Finally one of the Indians rose from his seat and touching the prostrate figure of the prisoner in order to claim his attention, thus addressed him in broken English :

" Listen, white man—Bold Warrior, listen : Me miko, chief. Me Pretty Crow—white man call 'Billy Buster.' You know tell of me ? "

"You mought be Adam's house cat for all I know," said Dan, as the Indian paused.

"Everywhere white man know 'Billy Buster,' big chief," continued Pretty Crow, unconscious of the captive's sarcasm. "Me take heap scalp, me kill heap bear, me kill panther, me kill wolf. Everywhere white man run when Pretty Crow come. Me mighty big warrior."

"Anyhow you got a healthy opinion o' yourself."

"Me son of the Kunipalgi since ten thousand moons."

"Well, I wouldn't brag about that if I were you. But it's a free country,—every man to his taste," said Dan, sitting up and blinking.

"Listen, Bold Warrior," proceeded Pretty Crow with heavy dignity. "You slip in Indian camp—steal little white squaw. You kill Red Arrow, you kill Water Turtle; you die. To-mor' you burn. Pretty Crow, great chief, white-man killer, tell you to-mor' you burn."

# CHAPTER XII

## THE INDIAN POINT OF VIEW

THE sentence of death was no surprise to Dan, and he received it in silence. The "trial" being at an end, he supposed that now the court would adjourn, and it was so. The five other chiefs rose and stood upon the skins on which their totemic badges were painted, and the old men got themselves up from their rush mats, as if preparing to issue forth from the tent. At the same time, two warriors who had been summoned, looked in at the door and ordered the prisoner to follow them.

Having risen to his feet with some difficulty, Dan suffered himself to be led out and rebound to the tree in the open space. There he remained during the greater part of the day, exposed to the jeers of the women and boys. His wounds were left undressed and, although in time the blood ceased to flow, he

presented a pitiable spectacle, his face being covered with the dried red fluid. In addition to these discomforts, all during the time the Indians were cooking and eating their mid-day meal, he was tormented by the odors that reached him, being now ravenously hungry.

The whole camp had long finished eating and even the dogs had been fed when finally, by order of the boastful Pretty Crow, an old squaw approached the tree under which Dan sat, bearing a gourd of water and an earthen dish containing boiled beef and corn bread. Even then the prisoner's hands were not untied, and having broken the bread and torn the meat into small bits with her fingers, the old woman proceeded with an ill grace to feed him, offering him a mouthful at a time on the end of a sharp stick and occasionally putting the water to his lips. Poor Dan ate so eagerly and was so long in being satisfied that the squaw appeared to be much disgusted and several times contemptuously uttered the

word "suck-aw," which when translated becomes "pig."

About three o'clock Hightower's Joe and another negro left the camp bearing axes and accompanied by a small party of Indians, no doubt bound for the bee tree. Some two hours later the prisoner was removed into a small vacated tent and made secure for the night. This was done by forcing him to lie on his back and putting a stout pole across his breast to which his wrists were tied with bear-grass thongs. His feet were also made fast to stakes driven into the ground, and finally a rope of deer hide was passed under his arms and secured to the tent pole behind his head. It was thus made quite impossible for him to rise, or even to change his position.

For a long while afterwards he was left entirely alone and lay staring at the white roof of the tent, thinking mostly of Maggie and Julian, and wondering if they had made good their escape. Surely the former would otherwise have been brought back to camp ere this.

It chilled his blood to think of the coming torture, but the hope that his friends were safe made it easier for him to face his own dreadful fate.

Dan had begun to take note that the light which had glowed upon the tent's white roof was slowly waning, when a slight sound attracted his notice and, turning his head a little, he saw that the back curtain of the tent had been loosened from its stays and was being lifted to permit the entrance of a crouching female figure. Presently a comely young Indian woman stepped within the line of his full vision, carrying a large calabash. Wondering what was her errand and why she had come in this stealthy way, he spoke to her civilly, asking her what she wished of him.

"No speak loud," she cautioned him, in a low, pleasing voice. "Me Hi-lo-lo—the Curlew, you call."

Without further explanation, she proceeded to wash the captive's bloody face with tepid

water from the calabash, into which she dipped a cloth, and this done, applied a soothing ointment to his wounds.

"You're a mighty good gal," remarked the astonished young man in the course of the operation, "and I'm powerful obliged to you. It's a wonder to me you'll take the trouble. Don't you hate white folks like the rest o' the Injuns?"

"Yes, hate, hate!" cried Hi-lo-lo with sudden passion. "White men bad. Take Indian land. Drive Indian away—make war, kill. White man hog—take all. Indian have nothing. Wind moan in tree for poor Indian. Leaf drop tear for pity poor Indian."

"Then why are you so good to me?"

Hi-lo-lo found it difficult to muster sufficient English to explain herself, but finally made Dan understand that although the conquering, crowding white race was the object of her inextinguishable hatred, she had been moved with compassion by the spectacle of the sufferings of the one white

man to whom her people by common consent had awarded the title of Bold Warrior. Fearing to approach him openly, she had come secretly on her errand of mercy.

"And that's all?" asked Dan. "I was a hopin' maybe you had some reason to want to git shed o' me, and would ontie me and let me have another chance to run. Well, anyhow, you're a good gal and I'm mightily beholden to you."

"Me no gal," said Hi-lo-lo. "Me wife great chief, Black Hawk."

"Well if he ain't good to you he ought to be killed," said Dan, with emphasis.

It was evident that the kindly Hi-lo-lo did not like this speech; clearly the Curlew loved the Hawk. Again she proudly asserted that her husband was a great chief. Nevertheless she looked sad, and presently she went on to say that it was the great Black Hawk who had led the raid beyond the borders of the swamp on the previous day and brought back the white girl captive.

"Black Hawk call white girl in sleep," she added in a troubled way.

"I reckon you was glad to git shed o' her, then," said Dan, seeing the drift of things.

"She no go," replied Hi-lo-lo sadly. "Black Hawk go after—bring back."

"When?" asked Dan, excitedly.

"Now. She find in bith-low — canoe. Black Hawk swim swamp—ketch canoe. Water Lily in camp now. Black Hawk happy."

"And Ju-ul—was she alone when they caught her?"

Hi-lo-lo answered yes, and went on to tell him of what was looked upon as a very strange circumstance in the Indian camp: the party sent back for the canoe had failed to find it. It was difficult for Dan to repress an exultant exclamation on hearing this news, which was proof enough that Julian was still at liberty and master of the canoe. If the boy only knew the swamp! There was the trouble.

"Look here, Hi-lo-lo," proposed the captive eagerly, "if you want the white girl out o' the way, you ought to turn her loose to-night after everybody is asleep. But it won't do any good unless you turn me loose, too, because she can't get out o' the swamp by herself. You turn us both loose and put us together late to-night, and then you'll be all right. The Black Hawk will come to his senses and remember what a nice, good, fine-lookin' little wife he has. Understand?"

Hi-lo-lo understood perfectly, but shook her head. She dared not. Besides, she was probably too loyal to run counter to the wishes of the tribe for the sake of a private benefit, and then it was inevitable that Black Hawk should some day take another wife anyhow, according to tribal custom.

"No, white man," she said in proud disdain, but her face was none the less sad as she took up the calabash and turned to go. Fresh words of argument, persuasion and entreaty rushed to Dan's lips, but the only

answer was the slight noise made by the dropping of the tent cloth behind the retiring figure of the good Samaritan.

Some three-quarters of an hour before this, the bee tree party had returned to camp and after the rejoicing crowd that welcomed them had been allowed to take another look at the shrinking girl, Maggie was delivered into the care of two old squaws called Chip-e-lop-law (the Whippoorwill) and Sho-ko-chee (the Sparrow-hawk). The two old women were widows occupying a tent to themselves, and they were now cautioned to bind their charge hand and foot before they lay down to sleep, as a safeguard against a repetition of last night's events. In all other respects the girl soon found that she was to be treated with great tenderness and consideration, express orders to that end having been given by Black Hawk as well as by the head chief, Pretty Crow, himself. Seated on a soft couch of cured skins in the privacy of an ample tent, the fair captive was presently offered a

gourd of cold water together with food that had been prepared for the evening meal of the chiefs.

Maggie had disdainfully refused the honey offered her by Black Hawk at the bee tree, but she now gladly accepted the good gifts that were placed before her, not, however, until after she had inquired as to the fate of Dan and learned that he still lived. That he should be burned at the stake next day was the decree of the morning council, the old squaws told her; but later it had been decided to delay his execution at the earnest advice of the priest or spirit-doctor, who wished the celebration of the new moon festival to be deferred no longer, and during a religious festival it was not becoming to put even an enemy of the nation to death. The proper time for the festival had fallen while the Creeks were on the march and postponement was unavoidable; but now, while they rested comfortably in their secure retreat, there was no further excuse for delay. How long the execution of

Bold Warrior was to be postponed, neither the wrinkled old Chip-e-lop-law nor the equally ill-favored old Sho-ko-chee could say.

It was with intense relief that Maggie heard this news. Fondly indulging the hope that meanwhile the militia would come to the rescue, she became almost cheerful. While eating the tempting supper placed before her, she asked the meaning of sounds of mourning and a recurring chant-like song that evidently came from a neighboring tent. Sho-ko-chee, the Sparrow-hawk, who could express herself fairly well in English, having lived near the whites in times of peace, explained that Fost-chi-taw (the Red Bird), wife of Water Turtle, was weeping for her dead lord and singing a funeral song in his honor. Being asked what were the words of the song, she listened intently a few minutes, then made a translation something like this :

"Farewell, O my loved one! Thou hast gone beyond the great river. Thy spirit is on the far side of the tall mountains, and I

shall not see thee for a hundred winters. But thou wilt scalp the enemy, thou wilt slay the deer, in the green forests beyond the great river. When the warriors of the Muscogee meet together, when they smoke the medicine pipe and dance the war dance, they will ask: 'Where is the Water Turtle? Where is the bravest of the Muscogee?' Then shall Fost-chi-taw answer: 'He fell on the war-path; he is gone to the hunting land of the brave departed.' Farewell, O my loved one!"

Pity for the widow, the poor stricken Red Bird, filled the heart of Maggie as she listened to renewed wailing, followed by a repetition of the funeral song. The widow of Water Turtle, the old squaws told her, would weep and sing in this way at sunrise, at noon and at sunset, until the dead warrior had made the journey to the land of spirits, for which three days were required.

The party returning with Maggie from the bee tree that afternoon had halted a few

minutes in a little clearing several hundred yards beyond the borders of the camp and stood gazing reverently on two newly made graves lying east and west, wherein, as the girl at once understood, lay the bodies of the two Indians who owed their death to Dan. On each mound a fresh fire of lightwood knots was burning, and at the side of each lay a rifle, a powder horn and a shot-pouch. A large dish of food was also at hand in each case, presumably for the nourishment of the spirits of the dead.

"I saw his grave," remarked Maggie now, as old Sho-ko-chee continued to speak of Water Turtle. "What was the fire, and the rifle, and all that meat and bread there for?"

Old Chip-e-lop-law shook her head as if loath to speak on such a subject with a stranger, but Sho-ko-chee answered solemnly that a fire was kept burning on the grave for three successive nights in order to light the spirit on its journey. The food was for the spirit's sustenance by the way and the rifle was for

use in the pleasant hunting grounds "beyond the great river." The difficulty presented by the fact that the fire was always on the same spot, that the food would remain untouched, and that the rifle would not be carried away, did not appear to disturb the credulous mind of the aged Sparrow-hawk in the least. Not so Maggie.

"But," insisted the girl argumentatively, "unless a dog or some wild animal eats it, that same bread and meat will stay there until it dries away to nothing—Water Turtle can't eat it."

At this not only Chip-e-lop-law seemed annoyed but Sho-ko-chee as well, and they cast indignant looks at the matter-of-fact young girl as they began talking rapidly in the Creek language; but finally Sho-ko-chee concluded to undertake the difficulties of explaining that it was not the food itself but its spiritual essence that would be eaten by the journeying spirit of Water Turtle. Whether it was also the spiritual essence of the rifle

that would be employed to shoot deer in the delightful hunting grounds of the hereafter, she did not say and Maggie decided that she had better not ask. The girl suspected that on the third night the spirit-doctor or priest would go out to the graves and remove both rifles. She did not dare even to hint at such a thought, but made bold to inquire as to the fate of good warriors in the hunting grounds beyond the great river.

"Have good time; shoot plenty deer, take plenty scalp," was Sho-ko-chee's answer, although Chip-e-lop-law interrupted to bid the girl be quiet.

"And how about bad warriors?"

"Do same," replied Sho-ko-chee, adding that there was, however, this difference, that the good were taken under the care of Isakita Immissi, the Master of Life and "helped," while the bad were compelled to shift for themselves.

Even to Maggie's unreflective young mind this seemed a strange if not unjust arrange-

ment of future rewards and punishments, an she was about to ask further questions, when the attention of all was attracted by sounds of sudden commotion in the camp.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE RIVALRY OF PRETTY CROW AND BLACK HAWK

The noise that checked further inquiry from Maggie was the beating of drums and the blowing of horns, intended to call the people together in the centre of the camp. The effect upon the Sparrow-hawk and the Whippoorwill was immediate and decisive. Getting promptly upon their feet, they began to talk rapidly in the Creek, meanwhile casting frequent glances at Maggie. It was clear that they wished to go forth and were at a loss to know what to do with her. To leave her behind was unsafe; to take her would perhaps anger the chiefs.

Being determined not to lose their share of the excitement, they finally decided to take her. Calling her to the door of the tent, they placed her between them and grasping her hands, led her forth. On their way toward

the centre of the camp, the girl noticed three whining dogs tied to a tent pole and asked the meaning of it. Old Chip-e-lop-law looked askance at her associate, while the obliging Sho-ko-chee made in answer the astonishing statement that dogs were not in favor with the moon deity, whose festival was now begun, and that the Creeks, therefore, even went so far as to beat their dogs during the moon's eclipse. She stated further that the eclipse was caused by a great terrible dog attempting to tear out the vitals of the kindly moon-god, in which undertaking it fortunately never succeeded.

"Great goodness!" cried Maggie. "Where does the dog come from? How could it get up to the moon?" She was almost ready to believe that she was being trifled with.

"White gal talk too much," said old Sho-ko-chee, angered at last by the girl's critical tone. "Talk much, know little; plenty tongue, no wisdom."

After this they moved forward in silence

and took their places in the crowd assembled near the centre of the camp. Here within an open space, in the view of all, stood a solitary Indian clothed in the skins of animals, his face painted in many colors, who, as Maggie learned later, was the priest or medicine-man. With his eyes intently fixed on the moon, which had just risen, he uttered the most hideous sounds, at one moment like the howling of a whipped hound, at another like the snarling of an angry cat. This curious performance was kept up until his lungs failed him, when the whole assembly took up the chorus, so to speak, barking like dogs or wolves, and shrieking out all manner of strange sounds.

The only variation from this discordant din was a dance around an upright pole painted in a variety of colors. Six leading warriors in their war paint, including the priest, went madly leaping around this pole, each shaking a gourd-rattle containing pebbles. When these were wearied, six others took their

places, and so on in turn, the assembled onlookers howling as before. The uproar was kept up until midnight, long after Maggie, at her earnest request, had been taken back to the tent and securely bound there in order that her guardians might return to the throng, and again take part in the strange jubilee.

Thus was inaugurated the festival of the new moon, which, fortunately for Dan, was to last three days according to custom. The nights were spent in fasting and in the manner just described, and the days in feasting, games and athletic sports.

It was early the next morning, before the festivities of the day had begun, that Maggie was honored by a visit from Pretty Crow, the head chief. Being introduced into their tent by the two highly gratified old women, the warrior seated himself on a bearskin before the startled young girl.

"Me Pretty Crow, big warrior, big chief," he said, with as amiable a smile as he could muster, after the wondering Sparrow-hawk

and Whippoorwill had withdrawn from the tent at his bidding.

Maggie said nothing in answer to this modest announcement, and awaited his further remarks. The girl was sure that never before had she looked upon so hideous an object in human guise. The chief was arrayed in what was probably his full dress, everything in the way of Indian finery being lavished upon him. His deerskin moccasins and leggings were decorated with wampum and he wore a gaudily embroidered belt of similar beadwork. His forearms were almost covered with bracelets of the same and his naked breast and shoulders were painted in all the colors of the rainbow. Around his neck was a string of bear's teeth and claws and from long slits in his ears hung bright-colored ornaments. His broad and naturally repulsive face was disfigured the more by streaks of red, blue and black paint, a red circle being drawn round the right eye and a blue one round the left. In addition to all this—Maggie laughed

to tell of it afterward—his head was covered with a "beaver" or old-fashioned stove-pipe hat. The last article had been captured in the recent raid of Roanoke in Stewart County, and in view of his errand, was perhaps considered a more fitting head-dress than the fillet of a dozen turkey feathers which usually crowned his long, coarse hair.

"Bold Warrior burn," continued Pretty Crow impressively. "Bold Warrior kill Red Arrow, kill Water Turtle; Indian burn him to pay. But little Water Lily no burn. Water Lily keep for squaw. Pretty Crow—me—keep Water Lily—keep for squaw."

"Oh, you will, will you?" cried Maggie, filled with uncontrollable anger and disgust, as she grasped his meaning. "I'd like to see you do it. It takes two to make a bargain."

Although sixteen years of age and to all appearances a woman, Maggie was, in many respects, a child. All consciousness of her helpless position, all sense of prudence, were now lost sight of in the tempest of her wrath.

"You can burn me, too!" she exclaimed recklessly. "I'd die before I'd marry a nasty old Creek Injun like you. I'll have you to understand that I look a little higher than a howlin' red idjit out o' the bushes!"

"Water Lily my squaw—yes," repeated Pretty Crow with a satisfied air, far from understanding the full meaning of the girl's rapidly spoken words.

"Go away from here and stop pesterin' me before I hurt you!" cried Maggie, with a threatening manner, but retreating farther from him.

"Water Lily wild — Pretty Crow make tame," said the chief, rising. He kept his temper, and something like admiration of her spirit was expressed in his glance. "Water Lily go in Pretty Crow wigwam when come Seminole land," he said finally, as he turned to quit the tent.

Hardly was he out of sight when Black Hawk appeared and was introduced into Maggie's presence, announcing a similar er-

rand. He was of the best type of his nation, tall, slender, with a rather handsome face and an intelligent, black eye. Although his body was naked to the waist, his decorations were less outlandish, in better taste and simpler than those of Pretty Crow. His moccasins and leggings were of the finest, and his wampum belt was richly embroidered, but his face was not painted and his only ornaments were gold bracelets and a single peacock feather half a foot in length standing upright in his hair. Seating himself on the bearskin in front of Maggie, he spoke better English but was no less abrupt than his predecessor in making known the object of his visit.

"Great goodness!" the girl exclaimed with a wearied air, "how many more of 'em are there? If this keeps up I won't be able to eat any dinner. I'm that sick now I don't know what to do."

"Black Hawk great warrior," the chief continued earnestly. "No shame for Water Lily be his squaw. Black Hawk head of the Hal-

padalgi since ten thousand moons. Black Hawk—me—last son of the Sacred Alligator."

"I don't care if you're the son of a mud-cooter!" cried Maggie.

Nevertheless she was moved in a measure by the earnest glance of the young chief's dark eye, which was at once eloquent and respectful. She promptly recognized a difference between him and the vain and hideous Pretty Crow, and soon felt disposed to forgive his folly, provided he would not press his suit.

"Black Hawk love daughter of the white people," urged the chief—"see her all night in dream. Her face sweeter to see than dew on the leaf in the bright summer morning."

"Look here, Black Hawk," said Maggie in a friendly tone, touched by this earnest declaration. "Don't you know it's not in reason to expect a white girl to be willin' to marry a Injun. Go away and don't pester me; you ought to know I can't do it. Be satisfied with the Indian woman that God made for you."

"Hi-lo-lo not please me now," was the answer, with a shake of the head.

"That's your wife's name, is it?" asked Maggie, taking note of the fact.

"Black Hawk be good to Water Lily," promised the young Indian with another pleading look.

"Well, I'm free to say I'd a long sight rather trust you for that than that ugly old Pretty Crow, but you must reely excuse me."

Black Hawk suppressed an exclamation of surprise and a jealous, angry gleam shot from his eye. He had seen the miko issue from the captive's tent and now knew what his visit meant.

"If no come to Black Hawk, Pretty Crow take you," he said cunningly. "Must choose —no help. Who save you?"

"The able-bodied men of Baker County—that's who," said Maggie in rising anger.

"White men no help you. Indian too strong. White men scare'."

"We'll see!" cried Maggie, with a furious toss of her little red head. "If they don't come soon and run every last one o' you out o' this swamp, I'll never speak to one of 'em again. If you all know what's good for you, you'll turn me and Dan loose and let us go home."

"No let go," answered Black Hawk, firmly. "Bold Warrior burn—Water Lily keep for squaw."

Maggie saw that argument was useless and held her tongue. "Didn't that moccasin bite you yesterday?" she asked in order to change the subject. "I thought you was goin' to see sights."

"Little hurt—soon well," was the answer, as the chief glanced indifferently at his slightly swollen hand. He now rose to retire, concluding not to press his claims further at the present time.

"How are they treatin' Dan?" asked Maggie. "Do they give him anything to eat? Won't you please go and tell him he's got

till day after to-morrow to live? And tell him howdy for me?"

Her repeated request to be allowed to see him herself had been refused, but she hoped that her present appeal might not be entirely useless. For the first time she smiled and a pleading expression crept into her face. Black Hawk, stoical warrior that he was, proud descendant of the sacred mythical alligator that lived ten thousand moons ago, was not proof against this and he readily gave the promise, although Dan's comfort was of no concern to him.

"Me go quick—now," he said, and with one more eloquent glance he departed.

Soon afterward the festivities of the day began. Maggie heard the sound of drums and horns and presently the rasping noise of the gourd-rattles which continued for a long while as an accompaniment to some dance or athletic game. The two old squaws seemed less eager to go forth than on the evening before. The visits of the two chiefs had

doubtless interfered with their morning's labors and long after the merriment began, they sat in their wigwam, each busily making a pair of moccasins out of tanned deerskin and talking constantly the while. Finally, however, as the uproar without increased, they put by their work and taking Maggie by the hand, set forth.

The sports had begun with races and wrestling matches among the Indian boys, and some thirty of the latter were now dancing with more agility than grace up and down the central open space of the camp, encouraged by the shouts of their elders, who stood along the four sides of a square, looking on with intense interest. The two old squaws and their charge, being late comers, were compelled to halt on the outskirts of the crowd, whence they could see but little at first. But as the young dancers wearied and retired, a movement of those in front of the three women enabled them to draw nearer and obtain a full view of the open space.

It was just at this moment that a youthful figure leaped into the arena at the farther end, and at once attracted all eyes by his dexterity and grace. He was a boy of some fourteen years, curiously attired in a mixture of Indian and white man's costume. His shirt and trousers were strangely at variance with the half dozen crimson feathers of the cardinal bird standing upright in his hair, and a necklace made of a long, brownish-yellow, cat-like tail with rings of a lighter tint, to which were attached the long curved claws of a panther. His hair was as black as a raven's, but curly, and though his skin was swarthy, he seemed too fair for an Indian. His face was hideously streaked with a dingy yellow paint, however, and Maggie was in no doubt as to his nationality until he drew nearer in the course of the dance.

After doing several "pigeon wings" and "double shuffles" in the most rapid and skilful fashion, the astonished assembly meanwhile looking on in silent admiration,

the boy suddenly bent down and, elevating his feet in the air, began to hop about and dance on his hands with the greatest ease and apparent comfort, still keeping time to the beat of the gourd-rattles and Indian drums.

The onlookers were at first dumb with astonishment at such unheard of performances, but soon began to manifest their pleasure by uproarious laughter and shouts, some of the more youthful warriors actually rolling over on the ground in their merriment, and when the boy ceased, there was heard an almost universal cry:

"Do so more! Do so more!"

The call for more being spoken in English, Maggie knew at once that the dancer was not believed to be an Indian. It was then, as she stepped forward with a searching glance, and as the boy stood smiling and looking fearlessly around upon the shouting assembly, that the girl was amazed and alarmed to recognize Julian.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A BOY'S IDEA

After Julian had shot the panther, which sprang into his canoe when the long, lonely night in the swamp was ended, he sat still for a few moments, staring, panting, and hugging his rifle for fear the beast would revive and spring at him again. Then, although his hands were trembling, he lost no time in ramming in another charge. As the panther meanwhile remained immovable, the boy concluded that his terrible enemy was really dead, and did not fire again. He was, however, on his guard, as he stepped to the centre of the canoe, across which the heavy body lay. Bending down, he saw that the ball had entered the animal's head above the left eye, causing instant death. While congratulating himself upon the result, Julian humbly ad-

mitted to himself that the discharge of his rifle was practically accidental.

His next concern was to get rid of the body. While considering how to dump it overboard, it occurred to him as a fine thing to cut off the beast's tail and claws as trophies. There being both a hatchet and a hunting knife in the canoe, he found little difficulty in doing this, after which, by using the paddle as a lever, he succeeded in heaving the dead beast overboard without accident, although the canoe dipped water and he came near losing his balance.

As the dead panther floated on the surface of the little lake, a most forlorn spectacle, the sleepy-looking alligators, whose heads rested above water, suddenly showed signs of life and swam rapidly forward. Whether or not they tore the body limb from limb and devoured it Julian did not wait to see. His empty stomach had already turned sick at sight of the blood trickling down on the gunwale of the canoe and his strongest impulse was to hurry away.

Dipping the paddle vigorously, he sent the canoe rapidly forward into the opening by which the lake had been entered the night before. Not until the alligators and their prey were shut from his view by intervening trees did he stop to bail the water out of the canoe. He then threw the panther's tail and claws out of sight in the bow, and dipping a handful of moss into the water, washed the blood from the gunwale.

A few minutes later the canoe entered another small bit of open water, evidently quite deep, and Julian set about catching a fish for his breakfast. Fortune favored him, and ere long, after some moments of thrilling sport, he lifted a fine three-pound black bass into the canoe. A fire was then built on a neighboring tussock, the fish cut into slices and broiled on the coals, and the boy ate heartily and thankfully.

He now felt better and more hopeful, but for some time sat idly in the canoe, considering what to do. His experience up to the

present moment convinced him that there was little prospect of his being able to find his way through the swamp to the outer world. He might wander for days, and meanwhile what would become of Dan and Maggie? Were it not out of the question to cross the island unseen, he knew he could find the creek whose current would finally take him beyond the borders of the swamp; but even if he could pass the camp without being stopped, there would be no canoe to float him. And as he had found on the previous afternoon, to attempt to coast the island down to the creek was but to advance deeper and deeper into the swamp and inevitably to go astray.

Harried by his perplexities, poor Julian began almost to wish that the Indians had taken him prisoner also. In that case he would now at least be in a position to know the fate of Maggie and Dan, whom he longed to see, and for whose present misfortunes he felt that his carelessness alone was responsible. How was it that he, the culprit, went free while they

were left to suffer? Was it the caution of cowardice that had preserved him? Scourged as it were by a very whip in the thought of this unjust and dreadful accusation, for a moment the poor boy determined to share voluntarily the captivity of his friends quite as much in order to ease his troubled conscience as to help them plan an escape.

It was while this impulse lasted that it suddenly occurred to Julian to land on the island and walk boldly into the Indian camp, carrying a flag of truce and pretending that he was a herald from the white forces now supposed to be gathering at Newton. He might say to the Indian chiefs that he had been sent to offer favorable terms, that in return for the surrender of the captives now in their hands the whites would agree to overlook their raid of the 27th and allow them an unmolested passage to the Florida line, provided of course that they went in peace and committed no further depredations. Surely, thought Julian, the Creeks would agree to such generous

terms at once. No doubt they would allow the captives to return with him, and begin their preparations to march out of the swamp without delay.

In the enthusiasm awakened by this engaging idea, Julian made light of the difficulties in the way, and it never occurred to him that the Indians would be surprised to find a mere boy the messenger from the whites, or that they would inquire into the manner of his arrival on the island and would be likely to suspect the imposture. It did occur to him that the whites might not be willing to agree to the terms of the "treaty" which he proposed to make, but he trusted that his earnest persuasions would in the end induce them to abide by his promises to the Indians. Flags of truce were always respected, so far as he had heard or read, and he therefore had no fear of being fired upon. That the Indians might reject the proposed treaty, and "hurl defiance" in the face of their peace-desiring foes, was of course possible, but in that event they

would surely allow the bearer of the white flag to depart in peace.

The moral side of the imposture did not trouble the boy. His statements would be untrue, but he believed the proposed deception to be the only way and quite justifiable in view of the circumstances. And certainly his pretended embassy was likely to harm no one, and was meant not only to save the lives of Dan and Maggie but to prevent further bloodshed. Such being his object, he thought no one would blame him, and believed that no sin would lie at his door even if the great plan failed.

While paddling over the backward track toward the island shore, Julian's fertile imagination rapidly developed the particulars of his plan. He decided that his handkerchief, tied to the end of a long green stick cut for the purpose, should serve as the flag of truce. In order to inspire greater respect, he would take with him the panther's tail and claws as evidences of the great adventure that marked his

passage through the swamp. As for the canoe, he thought it would be prudent to leave it carefully concealed, in case his plans should not succeed.

Half an hour later the island shore was reached, at a point near that where the landing had been made on the previous afternoon. Looking warily in advance for possible Indians, and with an eye for a favorable spot in which to conceal the canoe, Julian presently glided into some tall rushes, tied his little craft to an up-rooted pine that had fallen into the swamp, then making his way through the dead branches, he walked along the trunk of the tree to the shore. His first act was now to hide his rifle under the log, covering it with pine needles and bark. He then proceeded to tie the two ends of the flexible panther tail together, attach to it the four paws at equal distances apart, and drape this odd necklace over his shoulders, thinking that such an ornament would please the Indians, of whose necklaces of bear-claws he had heard.

One feature of his grotesque costume led to another. The clay on the roots of the fallen pine was a vivid yellow, and suggested to him the idea of painting his face after the Indian fashion. He had moistened some of the clay with water and was streaking his cheeks with yellow, watching his reflection in a puddle, when he heard the flutter of wings, and looked up to see a cardinal bird resting like a tongue of flame on a green branch within twenty feet. In his hurry to secure more Indian finery, Julian did not stop to reflect that it was an outrage to kill so beautiful and harmless a creature. Had his rifle been at hand, and had it been safe to shoot, the bird would not have been allowed to fly away. The pretty thing was probably looking for its mate, for Julian presently came upon the feathers of another red bird that had no doubt furnished a light breakfast for a hawk. The finest of the scattered feathers soon adorned the raven hair of the boy, who now appeared to be neither Caucasian nor Indian.

The tyty, hemleaf and cassina bushes that fringed the swamp gave place to clumps of palmetto and blackjack, as Julian advanced up the slope. The backbone of the island was the usual pine and wiregrass of Southern Georgia woods, but over to the right the boy saw what was evidently a very dense hammock and congratulated himself on having landed just where he did. Following the direction taken by the Indian party on the previous afternoon, he felt confident that he would not go astray.

During the whole tramp he saw no sign of a human creature. Even after the camp was sighted he saw grazing horses long before any Indian was visible. Such sentinels as were on duty during the sports of the festival were stationed on the opposite and more exposed side of the island, and thus Julian found himself walking into the camp itself without attracting notice. He attributed this to the evident and probably unusual excitement of the moment. He heard the beat of

the drums, the swish-swish of the gourd-rattles, and seeing a great crowd collected in the central space of the camp, he was overwhelmed with a sickness of soul at the thought that Dan might be burning at the stake.

He halted irresolute, his courage almost forsaking him, but on noting the regular tramp of feet, he guessed that the assembly was witnessing a dance, and went forward. Thus the self-appointed herald of peace drew near the very outskirts of the crowd unobserved. Although some few hurried glances swept over him without pausing to scrutinize, by such he was doubtless classified as a masquerading Indian boy.

Every interest was centred upon the dancers, including after a few breathless moments that of the boy himself. Julian was an adept in dancing as well as something of an acrobat. He saw almost at a glance that the dancers were without skill and that it would be easy to eclipse them every one. He thought if he joined the dance it might be a

further means of pleasing; at any rate it was a way to attract prompt and universal attention. Therefore, as the Indian boys retired to the sides, he leaped into view, flung down his flag, danced on his feet and then on his hands, as has been told, until the amazed and delighted spectators shouted again and again :

"Do so more!"

And "do so more" he did, to the unflagging delight of the crowd. But at length he wound up his performances, and, catching up the white flag, again lifted it above his head, and stood smiling upon the applauding assembly. Then it was that the chief men of the Creeks stepped forward and crowded eagerly round the strangely attired youth who, to all appearances, had dropped from the clouds.

"Who you, white boy? Where come?" asked half a dozen at once.

"From the white men," said Julian, pointing to his fluttering handkerchief, "to propose terms of peace."

"How learn such dance?" was then asked. "White boy know great dance."

"Where get tiger tail, tiger claw?" asked others, curiously touching the articles named.

"I killed the panther on my way through the swamp," was the prompt reply.

"White boy no tell lie?" asked the Indians, amazed and doubtful. How could this be,—without even a rifle? Could he, a mere boy, have fought and killed the king beast of the forest with a knife alone? If so, he must be more than mortal. Surely Isakita Immissi, the Master of Life, protected him.

"I am not in the habit of lying," said Julian proudly.

"Look at him," said the warriors one to another, their admiration unbounded; "he kill the tiger—kill the great Katsa.[1] White boy mighty young brave—look at little Tiger-Killer."

[1] The Creek word properly translated means panther, but the speakers employed the English term tiger in vogue among ignorant white hunters of that day.

The name involuntarily bestowed upon him was promptly taken up and repeated, but did not give general satisfaction, and the substitution was at once accepted and applauded when Black Hawk said: "'Little Tiger-Tail' mighty warrior."

All this was very fine. Julian was well pleased at the sensation he created, and with his brave title, but felt that he must proceed with his business. He again informed them that he came on a mission from whites, and asked to be brought before the chief.

"Pretty Crow chief—me," said the miko promptly.

"Then let us go into a tent and talk," proposed the boy, with all the dignity of an ambassador.

Pretty Crow led the way to the council lodge, followed by Black Hawk, the other chief warriors, several old men councilors and the medicine-man. As soon as all were seated and had tasted the "black drink," a

liquor brewed from the blue flag, with which the Creeks always opened their councils, Julian stated the proposed terms of peace as already outlined. He was listened to respectfully by all, except the priest whose face showed amusement, and now and then positive derision. An animated discussion in the Creek language followed the boy's speech, and while this was in progress the medicine-man, who sat nearest him, leaned forward and asked in startlingly correct English:

"Why have you dressed yourself in this way?"

"To show my respect for the Indians and their customs."

"How did you get here? You did not wade in, your clothes are dry."

"I found a way," answered Julian, uneasily, convinced that the Indian priest, after connecting him with the vanished canoe, suspected the whole imposture.

He was questioned no further. After one more keen glance, the medicine-man turned

from him and entered into the discussion which now soon reached a conclusion.

"No agree," announced Pretty Crow to the boy ambassador.

"Think well before you refuse our offer," replied Julian, beginning to tremble in earnest, but bravely attempting to argue the matter. The only result of his effort was a repetition of the laconic "no agree."

"Then I will return and report your decision," said the boy in a shaken voice, but rising with dignity and uplifting the flag of truce.

"No go," said Pretty Crow. "Little Tiger-Tail stay. No let go."

## CHAPTER XV

### CHITTA-MIKO, THE MEDICINE-MAN

"But I came with a flag of truce," stammered Julian. "You don't mean to say you won't respect it?"

A great fear fell upon the boy when he saw that his engaging plan, in the success of which he had fondly confided, was a failure. Instead of saving his friends, he had done no more than accomplish his own ruin. Maggie would be forced to take an Indian husband, and Dan and he must die together. Julian drew a long shuddering breath and a sob rose in his throat. And yet, after a few moments he was conscious of a certain sense of relief: at any rate he had made the effort, he had not run away and left his friends to their cruel fate. He had done what he could and his responsibility was ended; the future was in the hands of Providence.

"Flag no fool Injun," answered Pretty Crow, with a grim smile.

From that moment Julian gave up all hope of persuasion. It was clear to him that Chitta-Miko, the quick-witted medicine-man, had guessed the imposture and communicated his suspicions to the others. The despairing boy did not dream that the very imposture itself, instead of exciting the Indians against him, increased their admiration for him. The resource, the wit, the courage which he had displayed were qualities certain to appeal to their imagination and command their respect. Already captivated by the boy's winsome manner, his graceful and remarkable feats just witnessed, already regarding his trophies of the panther fight with envy and honoring him as the greatest known warrior for his years, their approval was now so pronounced that it could not fail to influence their behavior toward him. The suggestion being made by the medicine-man, it became at once the universal desire to possess the talents of this

wonderful boy by winning his confidence and persuading him to become a faithful member of the tribe. Of course he could not be expected to entertain the prospect cheerfully, but he would be likely to prefer it to death, and could he be successfully carried off to the wilderness of lower Florida, to the land of the still powerful Seminoles, the cousins of the Creeks, he would in time become resigned and loyal, being still so young; and one of his daring character would undoubtedly find satisfaction in, as well as do honor to, the position of chieftain which would inevitably be his destiny.

"No let go," repeated Pretty Crow with a kindly manner, "but no hurt Little Tiger-Tail. Bold Warrior burn, Little Tiger-Tail no burn. Injun heap good friend to pretty boy warrior. Take him Seminole land, make him big chief."

When the council had broken up, Chitta-Miko, whose name literally meant King-Snake (the rattler), took the boy aside and

explained to him in plain English that the Indians were pleased with him and meant to adopt him; he should live, but his friend must die.

"When is he to die?" asked Julian, doubtful what to say as to the future proposed for him.

Chitta-Miko replied that the festival would not end till midnight of the morrow; and that on the next morning Bold Warrior's life would be sacrificed.

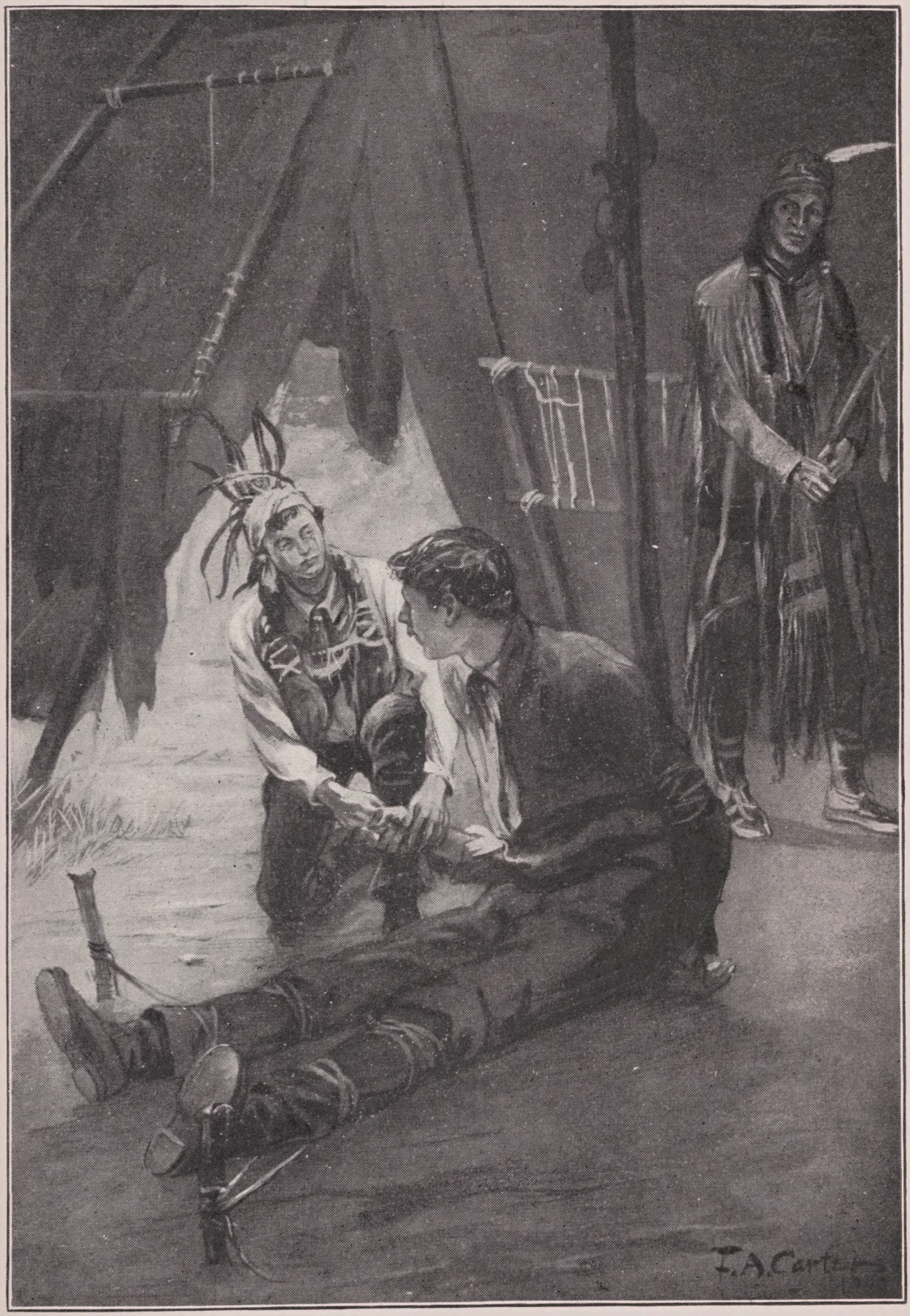
"If they want me to live with them and be one of them, the Indians ought to give me the life of my friend," said Julian, craftily. "If they will, I'll think about it."

Chitta-Miko seemed no little amused at this, and having reminded Little Tiger-Tail that he was himself a prisoner and in no position to dictate terms, he conducted the unhappy boy back to the playground.

Though a prisoner, Julian soon found that great liberty was to be allowed him. He knew that to venture beyond the limits of the

camp was out of the question, and would result in instant arrest, but within those limits he was permitted to walk about freely, and he looked on at all the athletic sports and games indulged in by the Indians during the continuance of their festival. Indeed he played a prominent part, his dancing and acrobatic feats being frequently called for. The Indians never tired of his performances, and treated him in the friendliest manner. Everywhere he was received with smiles. In the presence of the whole camp, Pretty Crow once put an eagle's feather in his hair, and told him that he would become a great chief at some future day in the Seminole land.

To speak with Dan alone was the only coveted privilege that was denied him. It was clearly the universal desire to oblige him in every way consistent with prudence, and his request to be allowed to visit Maggie was readily granted. He found her in the lodge of her elderly guardians, and after they had kissed each other, and Maggie had shed a few




DAN IN THE CONDEMNED PRISONER'S TENT.

half-angry tears, they sat together for an hour discussing the situation in whispers, while the Sparrow-hawk and Whippoorwill sat in the doorway talking in their own tongue. Nor was this the only place of meeting open to them, for, as has been shown, Maggie was allowed to walk about the camp under the watchful eyes of the two old squaws.

But Julian was allowed to speak with Dan only in the presence of Chitta-Miko, whose knowledge of English prevented not only the discussion of plans for escape but even a full recital of the boy's adventures. Dan was found tied in a sitting posture, a relief from the prostrate position occupied at night, and looked pale and dejected. There were tears in the boy's eyes as he threw himself down at the side of his friend and tenderly grasped his hand.

"To please the boy—Little Tiger-Tail, we call him"—said Chitta-Miko, as they entered the prisoner's tent, "the chiefs let him come to see his friend."

"Oh, Dan, I tried so hard, but everything seems to go wrong," groaned Julian.

"I know you done all you could, Julian. Never mind, honey," the young man answered.

Dan saw that the boy hesitated and asked no questions. Particulars might involve the mention of what ought to be kept secret. Both were thinking of the precious canoe which Dan suspected was still hidden. Julian little dreamed that the Indians were thinking of it also, and had sent a party to search for it along the island shore. Fearing that he might refuse to reveal its hiding-place, they had not questioned him, wishing to avoid harshness in the case of one whose good-will they desired to win.

"But you've got till day after to-morrow morning to live," ventured Julian, "and may be——"

Here Dan prudently interrupted him to inquire as to the conditions of Maggie's captivity, and no further reference was made to

the hoped for arrival of the militia, or other means for their escape. Julian spoke of the desire of the tribe to adopt him, and Dan at once said it was "a good thing." Chitta-Miko was surprised at their seeming resignation. He had expected them to whisper their plans and hopes in his presence, compelling him to separate them. Thus he was taken a little off his guard. His attention being attracted to some sound outside, he once took three steps forward and thrust his head through the door of the tent. Less than a quarter of a minute had passed when he returned to his place, but during that time Dan moved his mouth toward the boy's ear and whispered:

"If the militia don't come in time, you better try Hi-lo-lo, Black Hawk's squaw. She's jealous o' Maggie and maybe ——"

Dan suddenly drew back and spoke aloud of something else, seeing Chitta-Miko turning to retrace his steps. Julian would have been glad to hear more, but Dan had

given him a suggestion and was satisfied.

"I hate to think of those poor live turkeys we left tied on the little island," said Julian aloud. "I reckon they'll die soon."

"They're out o' their misery long ago," said Dan. "The varmints et 'em all up but bones and feathers the first night."

Shortly afterward the boy was told that his visit must come to an end, and as he turned to leave his friend the expression of his eye was a promise that he would not be idle. The visit was made at noon. Two hours later the festivities were interrupted by a storm of rain and thunder. Julian had been watching numerous contestants as they threw a wooden ball at a mark near the summit of a pole some fifty feet high, meanwhile on the lookout for Maggie, with whom he wished to confer about Hi-lo-lo, when the storm burst upon the camp and all hands scattered in search of shelter. In the rush Julian felt some one grasp his hand, and turning, saw Chitta-Miko. A few

moments later the two took refuge in the medicine-man's own tent.

There was nothing fierce in the expression of the Indian priest's face; except for a curious burning intensity in the stare of his eyes, he might have been called a mild faced man. But Julian was none the less conscious of an influence that made him uneasy. Chitta-Miko possibly united the arts of the Indian juggler, snake charmer and priest with that of the hypnotist, and it may have been partly his magnetic influence that affected the boy. Julian learned afterward that the medicine-man of the Creeks had been taught to read and speak English by the missionaries in his youth, an accomplishment which enabled him to add largely to the learning derived from native sources. He had now no designs on the boy, to whom he had taken a fancy, further than to win his confidence and promote in every possible way the plan proposed in the council house.

On entering the lodge in which Chitta-Miko

dwelt alone, for the Creek priests were always bachelors, Julian's feeling of uneasiness was not lessened at sight of a rattlesnake coiled up in a corner and a wise-looking owl squatting on the top of a stake. He doubted not that the fangs of the former had been removed, but shuddered to look upon it none the less. The numerous dried herbs and gourds hanging around the central pole were more reassuring, but who could tell what might be contained in the pots and earthen vessels, and above all in the mysterious medicine bag? Besides, the lightning flaring through the tent cloth every few moments and the peals of thunder that seemed to crack the very earth, were decidedly unnerving. As he stared about him curiously, Julian felt that he would like to ask many questions, but dared not do so.

Apparently divining the boy's thoughts, Chitta-Miko introduced the subject himself, saying much to interest his guest without revealing the secrets of his calling. He began

by saying that in some tribes it was believed that the lightning was a great, terrible serpent and the thunder was its hissing. He said he had heard of a tribe that believed the earth itself to be a great living creature flying around the sun, that the rivers and streams were its blood vessels and that it turned itself first one side and then the other to the sun in order to keep itself warm, thus causing day and night.

"And did they think the trees and grass were the great creature's hair, and the men and animals its fleas?" asked Julian, captivated by this tremendous idea.

Chitta-Miko said he did not know, but he smiled and seemed pleased. As the storm was subsiding and a bit of the brilliant bow of promise was seen through the opened door, he went on to say that some Indians thought that the Great Spirit restrains the rain-spirits from drowning the world by tying them with the rainbow.

"Why, isn't that strange!" cried the boy.

"The rainbow was the promise to Noah that there would never be another flood."

"I remember it in the sacred Book the missionaries gave me," said Chitta-Miko. "It was different a little, but not new. All the Indian tribes have an old tradition of such a flood, and of the creation of the land from the water in the beginning. It was all water before there was land. Some tribes say the land was made by the Manitou, the Great Good Spirit. The Creeks of old said it was made by Isakita Immissi, the Master of Life, but the Indians of the North said it was made by Michabo, the Giant Rabbit."

"A rabbit!"

The curious creation legend of the Algonquin tribes was then related at Julian's request, and after many questions bearing upon it had been asked and patiently answered, the boy inquired of Chitta-Miko where the happy hunting-ground of the red men was supposed to be. The reply was that some thought it was beyond a far, unknown river, others, that

it was in the sun, and the milky-way was the path by which to reach it. Some said the villages of the dead were in the west where the sun goes at night, others thought it was at the sunrise. The Creeks of old said it was inside the earth, whence they originally came. The legend runs, "At a certain time the Earth opened in the west, where its mouth is. The Earth opened and the Cussitaws (ancient Creeks) came out of its mouth and settled near by."

"Where do you think it is?" asked Julian.

"Where it pleases the Master of Life to have it, for those who have lived well are taken under his care after death. It may be that when the great teacher comes to the Indians again he will tell them more about it."

On inquiring who this "great teacher" was, Julian learned that the ancient traditions of all Indian tribes, so far as Chitta-Miko knew, with remarkable similarity tell of the coming among them in the dim past of a divine man who, after teaching them the arts of life and

the rites of religion, the forms of their government and the medicinal powers of plants, left them in some mysterious way, usually described as a miraculous rising into the sky, but giving them his promise to return again at some future time when he would again be their instructor and guide.

While listening to this solemn recital, the boy was reminded of the sacred story of the miraculous birth of the Teacher of men at Bethlehem, and of the ascent to Heaven when the appointed work was done, leaving behind the promise of a second coming in the fulness of time. What could this wonderful similarity of so many different traditions mean but that truth had been given to the red men also in the form best adapted to their nature and needs?

Before he quitted the lodge of the medicine man that afternoon, Julian asked one more question, namely, did the Creeks really believe they were the progeny of the animals from which they claimed descent and by the

totemic badges of which they were distinguished? The answer was that the wiser ones did not. One of the most famous clans of other times was that of the Hutalgalgi or Wind, and manifestly the wind could not be the forefather of a tribe. It must be simply that the several clans were originally protected or aided in some mysterious way by the animal whose name was therefore adopted in memorial. According to Chitta-Miko, there had always been in the tribe a veneration of certain animals, the supposed temporary earthly bodies of immortal spirits. Even yet the alligator was considered sacred and was never killed, the Halpadalgi, or alligator tribe, for this reason, enjoying a peculiar distinction.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CAPTORS QUARREL AND CAPTIVES SCHEME

After nightfall Julian found himself more closely watched, and gave up as useless a half-formed plan for liberating Dan. The boy spent the night in a brush tent in the company of several Indian youths. His limbs were left sufficiently free for comfort, but he was none the less securely bound by a rope to one of his companions.

On the next day, the last of the festival, the fact that Pretty Crow and Black Hawk had quarreled became known and furnished a greater sensation than the festival itself. Each was determined to possess the fair young Water Lily, and nobody knew how the trouble would end, for the two chiefs were of almost equal power and influence. Pretty Crow was older and a more experienced warrior, but Black Hawk, as the "son of the sacred alliga-

tor," was by birth at least his superior, and should the band divide it might be that the majority would feel compelled to flock to the latter's standard.

The situation was therefore grave. The old men shook their heads ominously, and ere long the idea was suggested and grew in favor of putting an end to the quarrel by removing the apple of discord. Let the Water Lily die by the same fire that was to be kindled around the feet of Bold Warrior. This would promptly dispose of the difficulty, and at the same time agree with time-honored precedent, for it was the original custom of the Creeks to kill all their grown-up prisoners, women as well as men, sparing only children.

But at first nobody dared make such a proposal to either of the two chiefs. In the early morning each repeated his visit to the captive's tent, Pretty Crow gorgeously arrayed in all his finery as before, and Black Hawk again noticeable for the neatness of his more simple attire and the manly earnestness of his

deportment. Having been convinced of the gravity of the situation by Julian, who had kept both eyes and ears open, Maggie received them more graciously than on the first occasion, although she contrived to postpone her decision, and kept both her august lovers in suspense. Later the two chiefs met in the open space and defied each other, afterward going off to sulk and meditate civil strife, regardless of the necessity of combining their strength in the face of a common foe.

At the suggestion of Chitta-Miko, a council was called at noon, and the old advisers, supported by the minor chiefs, took courage and argued the question in the presence of the two furious chieftains themselves. Nothing but the common peril hanging over all in the heart of an enemy's country could have induced Pretty Crow and Black Hawk to permit such interference in their private affairs. As it was, they were at no pains to conceal their haughty displeasure, and stormed and threatened in masterful style. Nevertheless

the proposal to settle the question by the girl's death was made in due course, and was instantly rejected by both. Chitta-Miko also spoke earnestly against the proposal. The more enlightened medicine-man was opposed to the slaughter of helpless prisoners in any case, and had already advised, though to no purpose, that Dan himself be spared and held for the sake of exchange in case a chief warrior of the tribe should be taken alive by the whites.

In place of the stern solution of the problem advised by the majority of the council, Chitta-Miko at last made bold to suggest that the girl's own preference be allowed to settle the vexed question: Let the Water Lily choose between them, and let the two mightiest of chiefs agree to abide her choice. A proposal so novel and so contrary to Indian customs and habits of thought would have been received with general derision had not the two warring chieftains, to the astonishment of every one, agreed to it, pronouncing

it a far better solution than the sacrifice of the maid. Possibly they seized upon it as a pretext for postponing their unwise quarrel until the safety of the Seminole land was reached, though it may be that each felt confident that he would be preferred. The vainglorious Pretty Crow could not conceive of a woman of any color preferring Black Hawk's lodge to the greater glory of his own, he being the acknowledged older and wiser head, and the chief commander of the band. Black Hawk, on the other hand, had reason to believe that Maggie looked with less repugnance upon his suit.

As soon as the council broke up, the quick-witted Chitta-Miko sought Julian, and bade him go secretly to Maggie and warn her that the longer she kept the two chiefs in doubt as to her choice, the better would be her chance of avoiding a marriage with either. The boy made haste to comply, wondering at Chitta-Miko's good-will, for it was not at once plain to him that the medicine-man's anxiety was not

to secure Maggie's welfare, but to delay the issue of a dangerous quarrel until the Seminole land was reached. Maggie, however, needed no such warning. Setting aside the question of gaining time for possible escape or rescue, she felt that indefinite delay was the most desirable of all things. And so, when the rival chiefs again visited her, with a craft beyond her years, she contrived not to offend either and to allow each to hope that, although she might court delay, her final choice would be in his favor.

So matters stood, when, on the afternoon of the last day of the festival, Black Hawk's wife, Hi-lo-lo, appeared at the tent of the Sparrow-hawk and Whippoorwill and requested a private interview with the captive girl. Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law, though the victims of an intense curiosity, dared not refuse the request of a chief's wife, and after introducing Hi-lo-lo into Maggie's presence, they reluctantly retired. The young squaw was dressed in a gay calico gown and

wore new, beautifully embroidered moccasins. Her chief ornaments were shell bracelets and earrings, the latter two inches long. Her hair was carefully braided in two long plaits, and the skin of her scalp at the partings was painted a bright red. She was undeniably good-looking, as Indian beauty goes, and Maggie wondered the more at Black Hawk's folly.

Seating herself on a skin, the young squaw announced that she was the wife of the great chief, Black Hawk, and added: "Me come look at white gal."

"And now you see me, I reckon you wonder why they're makin' all this fuss about me," remarked Maggie with crafty simplicity, smiling over-much and doing her best to look silly.

"Black Hawk fool," declared Hi-lo-lo with disdain, after a long survey. "Water Lily no good to see. Pale—sickly—like sick chicken—like foolish child."

"I'd like to box her ears," thought Maggie,

inwardly furious, but outwardly still smiling. "Why, yes, everybody knows I'm not good lookin'," she said aloud. "I'm the ugliest girl in Baker County. Why I've got red hair," she added, tossing her fine auburn ringlets.

Hi-lo-lo listened in astonishment. Though not quite imposed on by this amazing lack of feminine vanity, she became convinced that the captive white girl who had turned the heads of two great chiefs was no better than a silly child.

"Water Lily go to Pretty Crow's lodge?" she suddenly asked with a confidential, persuasive air. "Pretty Crow big warrior, big chief—plenty money buy cows."

"Why no, I rather think not," replied Maggie, archly. "You mustn't tell, but between you and me, if I've got to take anybody I think I'll take Black Hawk. He's a heap the best lookin'. Don't you think so? And I believe he'd treat me better than that conceited old Pretty Crow would. Don't he treat

you well? And, besides, Black Hawk's got only one wife and Pretty Crow's got three, so they tell me. I'd rather be second choice than fourth, wouldn't you?"

Hi-lo-lo was now furious beyond words. Her eyes shot darts of fire and her long nailed fingers moved threateningly. "Indian burn Water Lily to-mor'!" she hissed.

"No, they don't aim to now," the girl replied calmly, although she longed to laugh outright. "They're goin' to let me choose between Pretty Crow and Black Hawk, so Little Tiger-Tail says. I don't hanker after neither, but if it must be one or t'other, I'll take the son of the alligator every time. But," she added petulantly, "I wish to gracious both of 'em would quit pesterin' me, they make me plumb sick. I wish they'd turn Dan loose and let him take me home. That's what I'm after. If Black Hawk had a wife who set store by him she'd help me to git away, too!"

The last was said with particular emphasis, the girl looking boldly into the young squaw's

eyes. Hi-lo-lo's anger rapidly cooled, as she comprehended that Maggie's real desire was not to "take" Black Hawk but to escape.

"Me help you go maybe," she suddenly leaned forward and whispered. "Bold Warrior no go, but Water Lily, yes, may be—if go without."

"I'll go anyway you can fix it," said Maggie eagerly.

But Hi-lo-lo was not ready with a plan, and presently departed without proposing one. Outside the door of the tent she remarked to the cringing Sparrow-hawk and Whippoorwill in the Creek tongue: "You don't need to watch that white girl closely. She's as silly as a sheep. She hasn't the sense to run away if there's a chance."

Always on the lookout, Julian did not fail to know of Hi-lo-lo's visit, and soon after contrived to speak with Maggie. Both felt encouraged and hopeful for the time, but as the afternoon wore away, the boy became downcast and restless. Through the aid of Hi-lo-lo,

Maggie might escape that night or the following, and he might possibly contrive to accompany her, but Julian saw that there was little or no chance for Dan in any case, and that he must make an effort to save him before it was too late. It must be done that night or never, for the following morning was appointed for his death, and a second postponement was not likely.

While apparently looking on with interest at the continuing festivities, the boy racked his brain for some promising plan. Having at length decided on a course of action, he contrived to scribble a few lines on his handkerchief with a bit of charcoal, sharpened to a fine point with his knife. This task was accomplished without attracting notice in the only way possible, that is, by calling on Maggie a second time, and sitting down to the work within the tent while the inattentive Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law sat talking just outside the door. Like every one else, the two old squaws looked with favor on

Little Tiger-Tail, and were disposed to allow him much freedom of intercourse with Maggie, particularly after he had delighted them with the gift of a glistening pearl button apiece, cut from his shirt.

His important communication once written, and the handkerchief folded up and put out of sight, Julian sought Pretty Crow and begged permission to visit Dan a second time. At first his request was refused, but so earnest, simple and artless was his manner, and such was the good feeling he had excited, that in the end he gained his point. He was sent to the condemned prisoner's tent in the company of an Indian warrior who had a fair knowledge of English, and the two were permitted to enter without delay. For a quarter of an hour, Dan and Julian conversed in a perfectly innocent manner about matters of interest in the camp, in no way exciting the suspicion of the attendant that they were plotting. At the outset the boy planted himself midway between Dan, who was seated tied to the cen-

tral pole of the tent, and the Indian who stood near the doorway. The latter little dreamed that in the course of the innocent conversation the boy unrolled his handkerchief and held it some time against his breast in full view of the prisoner, who read twice over:

"Hi-lo-lo will help free Maggie and me. I will loosen you to-night. Run straight across island. At edge of swamp turn to right to big fallen pine. Canoe is tied to outer end, in the sedge. Go straight for militia. Never mind us."

A long, steady stare and a slight inclination of his head were Dan's signs to indicate that he approved and would act on the plan if the opportunity came. As Julian turned obediently to quit the tent a few minutes later, the handkerchief having been crumpled together and thrust out of sight in his jacket pocket, it seemed to the attendant Indian that there was something singularly cheerful in the atmosphere of the condemned man and his sor-

rowing friend. He set this down to the influence of that noble, intrepid spirit of stoicism in the presence of danger and misfortune which it was the high aim of every warrior to cultivate.

# CHAPTER XVII

## DAN'S ESCAPE

After dark Julian was disheartened to find that it would be more difficult for the condemned prisoner to escape on this last night than at any previous time. Not only was he bound as usual on his back, but a watch was set. Throughout the night a single sentinel was to pace slowly around the tent until relieved by a successor. To enter unseen and cut Dan's bonds now seemed impossible, and Julian at first gave up to despair.

Soon, however, he saw cause for hope. Dan's tent faced the open space where the crowd collected at night, and Julian observed that the sentinel paced rapidly round the back and slowly round the front, in the latter case looking eagerly toward the howling dancers. There was thus a bare chance that the boy could reach the tent from the back and crawl

beneath the uplifted wall while the guard paced slowly round the front; but this would have to be done without attracting notice, and before he himself was led away to his own tent.

He hesitated a long while before venturing to make the attempt. It was perhaps ten o'clock in the evening, and the excitement among the Indians crowding the open space was at its height when, knowing he had little more time to spare, the boy resolved to wait no longer. Stepping backward, without attracting attention from the company of those absorbed spectators with whom he had been told to stay, he slipped quietly through the neighboring groups and, darting around the nearest tent, stood on the watch until the sentinel had passed hurriedly round to the front of that one in which the prisoner lay. Then the boy ran forward, dropped on his knees, lifted the rear wall of Dan's cloth prison, and crawled beneath it.

Once under cover, he kept still for a few

moments, almost holding his breath until certain that his movements had attracted no attention. No outcry followed and the howling went on as before. He then groped forward whispering, "Dan!" The answering whisper, "All right," came promptly, and in a moment Julian's outstretched hands touched the prostrate figure. No time was then lost in opening his pocket knife, passing his hands over Dan's arms and legs and cutting every cord that bound him.

"Don't move until everything is quiet in the camp," was the boy's advice, whispered in the ear of his prostrate friend. "You'll be seen and caught if you try it before. Better take the chances of their not finding out that the strings are cut. If you lie still and keep the pole across your breast, they won't know the difference even if they look in at the door with a light."

"I reckon you're right, Julian, honey," was the response to this. "But—but are you sure the Injun gal'll help you and Maggie——"

"Certain. Can't stop to tell you about it," replied the boy, with an assumption of greater confidence than he really felt.

Then, with a whispered "Good-bye," he was gone, or so Dan thought. But as Julian was about to raise the back curtain, he stopped short, recollecting the pacing sentinel. The beat of the drums, the swish-swish of the gourd rattles, and the cries of the warriors drowned all lesser sounds, and listen as he might, Julian saw that it would be impossible to locate the sentinel. Hesitating a few moments, he threw himself on the ground and lay there, lifting the curtain and holding it some two inches high until he had seen the sentinel's moccasins appear, hurry past and disappear round the corner. Then he crawled out, leaped to his feet, darted round the neighboring tent, entered the crowd and stood again beside those supposed to keep an eye on him, —all before his absence had been noticed.

It was done—and so far all was well. Julian was enraptured. It seemed too good to be

true. An hour later the boy retired to rest with his guardians, and for a long while lay wide awake, listening and dreading the commotion in the camp likely to follow the discovery of the prisoner's escape. After midnight all was still, and the time dragged wearily on until the boy began to fear that long since the sentinel had discovered that Dan's bonds were cut. When at length he fell asleep it was only to dream that Dan was being chased across the island by his enemies, and finally to awake and learn that this was indeed true.

It was past three o'clock in the morning when Dan at last resolved to wait no longer; but before that hour he had risen often for a few minutes at a time in order to exercise his cramped limbs and thus prepare for flight, afterward lying down and replacing the pole across his breast. After the moon-worshipers dispersed at midnight and all became quiet, Dan could distinctly hear the footsteps of the passing sentinel and was never taken off his

guard when the latter occasionally stopped at the door, drew the curtains aside and looked in. Twice after this happened he noted that the footsteps of the sentinel sounded gradually more faint until they were no longer heard, and that after a few minutes they seemed to be replaced by other steps that were not quite the same. Thus he was led to believe that one sentinel had gone to rouse another who was to succeed him.

It was after he noticed this fading into silence of the guard's footsteps for the second time that Dan rose softly, lifted the back curtain of the tent, and seeing no sign of a living creature, crawled out, and crept, bent double, across the open spaces. Once in the cover of the brush, he took his bearings and hurried toward the north end of the island.

He had gone little more than a quarter of a mile when he heard a shout of alarm, followed by the sounds of that sudden commotion in the camp which awakened Julian from the dream to the reality. Shortly afterward

he heard the loud baying of several hounds, and then he ran for his life. The game of hide and seek on the island was now to be played in earnest. The outlawed dogs, which were kept in chains during the festival, had been let loose and started upon the track of the fugitive.

As he neared the northern limits of the island, panting and staring wildly into the gloom ahead, Dan well knew that if he missed the place described by Julian he was lost. There would be no time to look about him and consider; at the best the hounds would be almost upon him the moment he leaped into the canoe. Every time their long, lingering howls sounded on the still night air they seemed startlingly nearer than before.

At length the ground went downward under his flying feet and he saw the inky gloom of the swamp depths before him. Turning along the shore to the right some two hundred yards, he promptly located the big fallen pine —for the moon still shone—and pushed his

way out upon it until he stood among the dead outstretching branches decorated here and there with bunches of brown needles. Peering forward, he saw plenty of sedge and even the depression or path made by the hidden canoe, but the canoe itself was gone.

Dan halted irresolute, wondering if he had missed the right fallen tree. A moment's thought convinced him that this was not likely, for Julian's directions had been plain enough. What if the Indians had found the canoe and hidden it in another place? He thought this likely and that therefore it would be folly to attempt to find it under the present circumstances. Dan concluded that the only thing to be done was to cross with all speed to the western side of the island, whence it was possible to reach the outer world through some four miles of jungle covered with shallow water. The chances of successful escape were now slender enough, but something must be done. He might at least reach and disappear in the jungle before

the Indians overtook him. As for the dogs, he must take the chances of an inevitable fight with them, armed only with a club or lightwood knot; for after his capture he had been completely disarmed, even his pocket-knife being taken from him.

The prospect of so unequal a struggle with the pack of hounds caused the fugitive to repent of having run away from the camp empty handed. He regretted that he had not attempted to leap upon the sentinel from behind, disable him and take his weapons. In the midst of these vain regrets he was startled by the sound of loud, shrill howls, indicating that the dogs were now not more than three hundred yards away. He saw that he must act at once. To cross the whole width of the island, beating the hounds off as he went, was to be overtaken by the Indians without fail, and Dan felt that to place himself beyond reach of the dogs and bide his time was the utmost he could now hope to do.

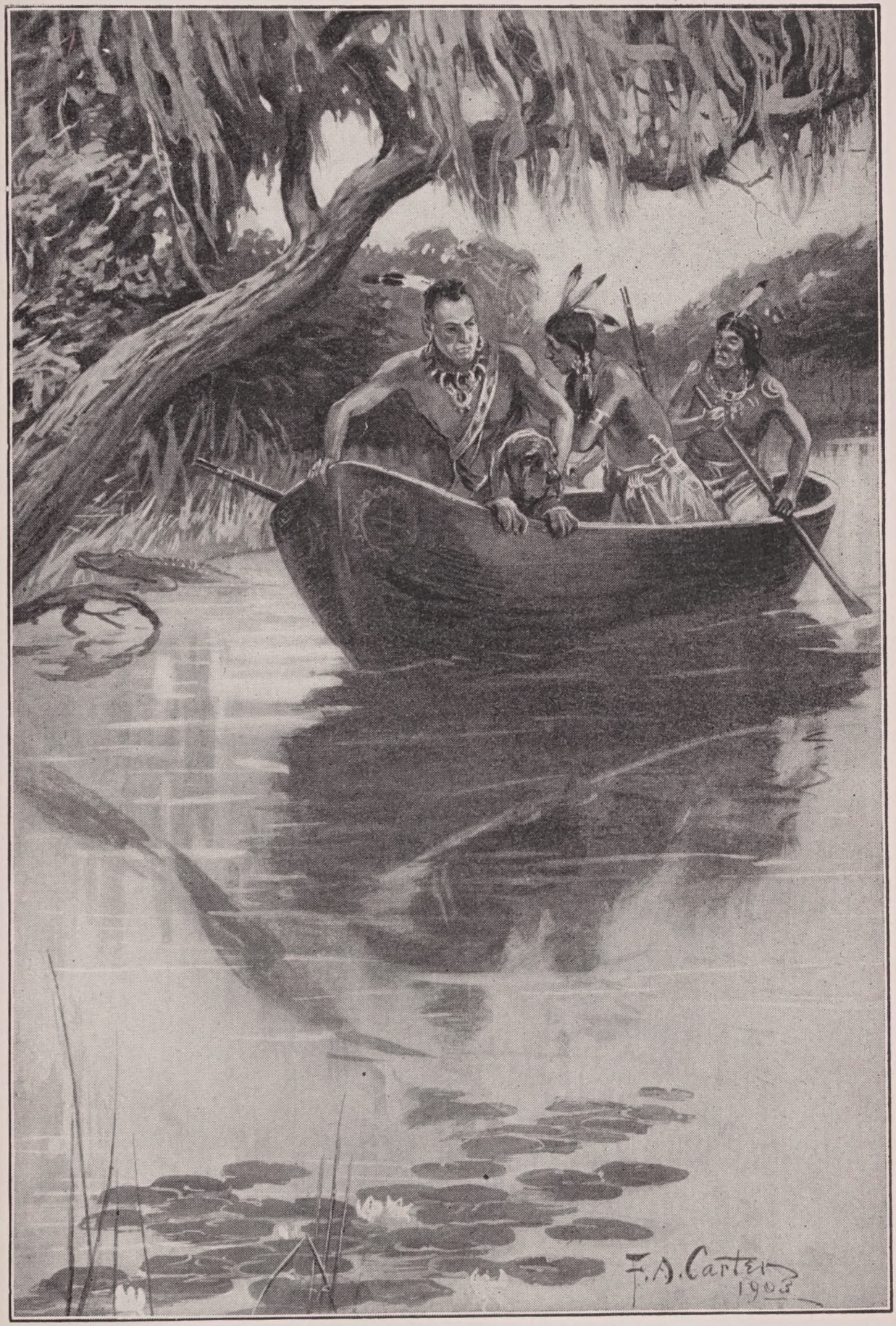
So without further hesitation he leaped into

the sedge, sinking above his knees in water. He made his way straight out into the submerged swamp, at first wading, then swimming, and always struggling with difficulty against crowding, unseen obstructions. His noisy splashing was distinctly heard by the dogs as they presently leaped upon the fallen pine and halted a moment, puzzled, before they opened a steady baying with snuffing nostrils pointed toward the dark depths before them. But by the time the foremost of their masters arrived on the scene the stillness of the dark swamp was no longer broken by even the faintest sound.

The warriors who came leaping down the slope on the track of the dogs understood the situation at once and dispersed themselves along the borders of the swamp to listen and watch while waiting for daylight. In half an hour the gray light of dawn came filtering down through the tree-tops and the Creek warriors were prompt to bestir themselves. As Dan suspected, they had found the canoe

and hidden it in another suitable spot within a few hundred yards, and broad daylight had no sooner penetrated the swamp than they brought it forth. Three warriors armed to the teeth got afloat and, taking one of the hounds with them, paddled boldly into the swamp, confident of finding and recapturing their helpless, unarmed enemy.

But although hours were consumed in the search, although they penetrated the swamp for more than a mile and beat all the intervening bush most carefully, they were unsuccessful. Sometimes, judging from the behavior of the hound, they felt confident that the fugitive was near, but always failed to locate him. Not a trace of him was to be found. The trail ended in the branches of the fallen pine, and thence Bold Warrior seemed to have mysteriously vanished into the unseen and unknown. Suspecting that he had entered the swamp only to issue forth soon afterward at a neighboring point, the Creeks scattered widely and sought the trail with the help of




THE INDIANS FAILED TO LOCATE HIM

the dogs. In the course of the day the whole island shore was patrolled, but without result.

All day the search was continued with untiring energy. The fact that the fugitive ran straight for the point where Julian was known to have left the canoe made it clear that the boy, in spite of every obstacle, had contrived to communicate with him. It was also more than suspected that Little Tiger-Tail had been actively concerned in the loosing of the prisoner's bonds, although how this could be so, since he himself had been closely watched after nightfall, it seemed impossible to explain. None of the warriors or chiefs remaining at camp questioned or reproached the boy, however, and there was no apparent change in their friendly attitude toward him. Indeed it is more than likely that their respect and admiration were increased.

The day was not ended before Julian discovered that Chitta-Miko and the chief warriors had disagreed. The medicine-man was opposed to the slaughter of prisoners in any

case, and when at noon it seemed clear that Dan had made good his escape, he urged that the search be given up and the warriors be called in to prepare for an early march on the morrow. Chitta-Miko thought they had rested long enough in their retreat; the moon-festival being over, they should now go forth without delay and continue their march toward the Seminole land. A long journey and perhaps hard fighting were before them, and the more time they wasted the better opportunity would be offered the whites of the neighborhood to bring together a force capable of opposing their progress. Besides, it was now the first day of the twelfth moon, Hi-yote-lock-o (July), and it was necessary to reach their future home as soon as possible in order to celebrate the great annual eight-day festival called the Boos-ke-tau.

As Julian learned by inquiry, the answer of the chiefs to this advice was in substance that the band was too strong to be in any real danger from the whites, that the observance

of the great festival in such circumstances as the present might be delayed without sin, and that therefore nothing should be left undone in the search for Bold Warrior, for the people had been cheated of their rightful prey. Besides, the tribe should not go forth at the risk of a battle before the "war physic" had been brewed and the warriors had drunk it in solemn assembly, and sung their war and charm songs. This "war physic" (which was brewed from the cassina plant, and supposed to contain a fragment of the horn of the fabulous horned snake and of the bones of a panther) was believed to render the Creek warrior irresistible in battle. It was in vain that Chitta-Miko promised to brew the "physic" at once, and suggested that the warriors drink it and sing their songs that night and during the first three nights after the march was begun. The chiefs were not yet ready and could not be persuaded to march on the morrow.

As night drew on, still with no news of Dan's recapture, Julian and Maggie exulted

in the belief that he must ere this be safe, for he of all people was best acquainted with the labyrinths of the Chickasawhatchee, and the history of the day clearly showed that he had found means to leave the island even without a canoe. Freed from further anxiety for his safety, their thoughts now turned to plans for their own escape.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HI-LO-LO AND MAGGIE

To all appearances Hi-lo-lo had repented of the promise whispered to Maggie on the previous afternoon. All through the day a visit from her was anxiously expected in the tent of the Sparrow-hawk and the Whippoorwill. Not only did she fail to make her appearance, but she manifestly avoided Julian when he twice made attempts to speak with her. The hopes of the boy and girl, which had risen high after Dan's apparently successful escape, were therefore brought low again as night drew on, and they listened with heavy hearts to the charm and war songs sung by the warriors that evening.

Several Indians remained on duty during the night opposite that portion of the swamp wherein Dan had vanished. Sentinels were also posted at various points on the western

side of the island. But most of the warriors spent the night in the encampment; and these, to a man, were nothing loath to begin drinking the war-physic prepared by Chitta-Miko, although the date of their departure from the swamp was not yet fixed. As a rule the liquor was drunk during four successive days before a start on the war path was made.

When Maggie lay down for the night between old Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law, the weird songs still grated on her ear. But Julian sat with his night companions in the open space until a late hour—until the hardiest of the drinkers and singers wearied, and, by common consent, broke up the meeting and retired to their tents. The boy understood nothing of the words of the songs, but suspected that the singers boasted of achievements that were largely imaginary. As for the music, he thought it very monotonous and tiresome. But in spite of this and his growing discouragement he looked on and listened

with great interest, and even consented to taste the not altogether unpalatable "physic."

Although no longer counting on the aid of Hi-lo-lo, Julian could as yet form no plan of independent action, and he retired to rest in the company of his keepers with the prospect of an indefinite captivity for Maggie and himself. But as neither was in danger of death, and Dan was out of harm's way, his trouble of mind was not so serious as to prevent sleep. There was still the hope that the Baker County militia, after being reinforced, if they did not venture to invade the swamp, would at least attack the Indians on their southward march and prevent them from carrying their captives to the Seminole strongholds in Florida. He thought it very strange, however, and little to the honor of the local soldiery, that they had now allowed five days to pass without striking a blow.

Julian had not failed to take advantage of the comparative freedom allowed him in order to lay siege to Hightower's Joe, who was fre-

quently to be seen coming and going, and always with the most cheerful of smiles. The boy made more than one effort to purchase the runaway's aid in behalf of Dan, but the results were not encouraging. Although, with the characteristic good humor of the average of his race, the negro glibly agreed to do all that was asked, he made no move toward the fulfilment of his promises. He had no grudge against Dan, Maggie or Julian, and would no doubt have preferred to see them out of harm's way, but he was neither courageous nor energetic, and feared the anger of his red masters, who he knew were not to be trifled with. Julian was not slow to see that he was wasting time and soon transferred his hopes to Hi-lo-lo, only to fall back after all on his own cunning and resource to accomplish his end. But he had never let slip an opportunity to upbraid Hightower's Joe for his faithlessness, in good round terms, rising in his wrath and the strength of his denunciations as he listened to the negro's loud, good-

humored guffaws and renewed promises of aid that were to be forgotten in an hour.

Before the night had passed it was shown that, unlike the too ready agreement of the negro, the reluctant promise of the young Indian squaw was to be kept. It became evident that her apparent indifference during the day was merely part of a plan to divert suspicion from herself.

No sooner had the moon disappeared behind the forest wall about three o'clock in the morning, throwing the encampment in deep shadow, than she stealthily emerged from beneath the uplifted curtains of Black Hawk's wigwam and moved warily in and out among the neighboring tents.

A few minutes later she crouched breathless behind the tent of the widowed Sparrow-hawk and Whippoorwill. Listening for some little time, and being reassured by the unbroken silence throughout the encampment, she set to work and after some effort succeeded in pulling up two of the stakes that

pinned the back curtain to the ground. During her visit to Maggie, Hi-lo-lo had indulged in something more than mere jealous thoughts. Her quick eye had shown her on which side of the wigwam the captive slept, judging from the unusual comfort of the latter's couch, and she at the same time found cause to believe that the skins piled on the other side were scattered at night to form two couches for the old squaws, one across the door and the other at the prisoner's right hand. Her design now, therefore, was to open a way immediately behind the head of the sleeping white girl.

Her calculations were so exact, indeed, that before she had crawled halfway beneath the uplifted curtain she was in a position to touch Maggie's head with her hand. Drawing herself a few inches further within, she put her hands warily forward, moved them to and fro, then lay still as death, in great fear. Her hands had encountered nothing but the bare pillow, or rather the upper portion of the couch, which was evidently unoccupied. The

interior, now that the forest cut off the light of the low moon, was quite dark and Hi-lo-lo was helpless. To move farther with outstretched hands in search of Maggie's sleeping form was to run the risk of laying hold of one of the old squaws instead. In great distress, the young woman was about to draw back in order to consider what to do, when a soft voice whispered in English:

"Who is there?"

Fortunately Maggie happened to be just now awake, although she had slept well during the greater part of the night. Her attention having been attracted to the slight noise made by the pulling up of the pegs, she listened intently and a moment later sat up in bed. On seeing the dim outlines of a human figure stealthily invading the tent, her first impulse was to call out and awaken the old squaws, but happily she recollected Hi-lo-lo's promise in time to check her cry.

The whispered answer which she received was at once reassuring, and she lost no time

in crawling through the opening after the vanishing figure of her deliverer, straining every nerve to imitate the noiselessness of the other's movements. As she thrust her head beneath the curtain, old Chip-e-lop-law stirred in her sleep with a full-chested snort, and Maggie lay prone on her face for half a minute before she felt assured that she might move without danger.

The trying experience was over at last and the impatient young Indian woman hurriedly led her willing charge into the neighboring brush, and thence by a roundabout way through the woods to the spot at the water's edge where Dan had at first landed on the island. There Hi-lo-lo pointed out a raft of logs which had been put together on the previous day by two Indians who had made an experimental voyage on it a mile or two up the creek.

"Water Lily go on raft," she said. "Push pole in mud—float down creek all day—come out swamp."

"But where's Julian?" asked Maggie anxiously, having expected to find the boy awaiting her. "Where's Little Tiger-Tail?"

"He sleep—he no go."

"Why, I can't go without him! I'll get lost. Besides, I can't paddle that lumbering raft."

"Yes, go quick," replied Hi-lo-lo, glancing about her apprehensively. "Keep in creek—float down—to-mor' come to white men."

"Oh, I'm afraid," gasped Maggie, looking fearfully out into the dark, dismal swamp, and leaning toward the Indian woman with a suppressed cry as the abrupt hoot of an owl was heard. Although her fears were genuine, she felt ready to make the attempt alone as a last resort, but was determined to have Julian with her if possible.

"Stop play fool. Git on," urged Hi-lo-lo, squatting down and putting her hands on the raft. "Me push you for start."

"No, no; go and bring Julian and let him go with me."

"Little Tiger-Tail stay: he sleep with young men. Young men wake—no let go."

Hi-lo-lo was not quite sincere in this statement, for she knew it was probable that after drinking deeply of the war-physic the young men without exception would sleep like logs, and that it would be comparatively easy to loose the boy and lead him without hindrance from the slumbering encampment. But she had no reason to desire Julian's escape. All her people wished to retain him captive and Hi-lo-lo's determination that he should stay with them was no less resolute than Maggie's that he should go. Even to help the latter off was more of treason to her tribe than she liked to think of.

"Then I won't go a step," declared Maggie vehemently, seating herself on a log.

Hi-lo-lo came close and stared hard, a threatening look in her eyes. "Water Lily no want go," she said at last. "Water Lily want go in wigwam Black Hawk. Water Lily tongue crooked."

Checking a contemptuous denial, Maggie answered quickly, not too angry to be cunning: "You can think what you please; I won't go a step."

Hi-lo-lo remained silent some time, struggling with anger and doubt. At length she pointed impressively toward the raft, intimating that there was the means of escape and if it were not taken advantage of, the captive alone would be to blame.

"Now me go," she added, and then walked haughtily away.

But as soon as she knew that her figure was no longer in view she stealthily retraced her steps to a point whence Maggie could be watched unseen. For half an hour she remained there, her angry eyes fastened upon the immovable figure on the log. Convinced at last that the white girl really cared little to escape, and fearing that she was more than half inclined to reconsider and go into the wigwam of Black Hawk, the distressed Hi-

lo-lo stole away from the place and hurried toward the encampment.

Unable to decide what to do, poor Maggie remained in her seat for fully an hour, quite heedless of the probability that the two old squaws would awaken to find her gone and give the alarm. The evidences of a commotion in the camp would have driven her instantly upon the raft, but hearing no disquieting sounds, she remained where she was, always hoping that Hi-lo-lo would after all, take her at her word and set Julian free. At every croak of frog or night bird she started and trembled, expecting to see the form of an Indian warrior rise from the brush before her, and so at last when she heard the whistle of a quail close by, its probable meaning did not occur to her. A rustling of the bushes a few feet away, instead of reminding her of the well known signal, caused her to crouch down beside the log and remain cowering there until a young voice called out anxiously, but softly,

"Cousin Maggie!"

"Oh, Julian, it's you! Did Hi-lo-lo turn you loose?"

"Yes. But she didn't seem to enjoy it a bit."

All further explanation was deferred. A minute later they were on the raft, had pushed it off, and were floating away in the darkness.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CHITTA-MIKO'S VISION AND THE FLIGHT DOWN THE CREEK

GREAT was the excitement in the Creek encampment at sunrise next morning after old Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law ran screaming from their tent and proclaimed the fact that their privacy had been invaded during the night and the Water Lily was gone. For scarcely had they done so when several Indian youths came leaping out of a brush-tent and cried out that Little Tiger-Tail had slipped his bonds and was also missing.

Pretty Crow's fury was so great that he threatened not only the mortified young men but the two miserable old squaws with the most dreadful punishment. He at once took council with the elders and it was agreed on all sides that some member of the camp had

assisted the prisoners to escape. Suspicion promptly fell on Hightower's Joe, whose laughing conferences with Julian had been noticed, and this gay young African was dragged in terror before the angry miko. After being vainly questioned, he was most soundly thrashed with large hickory switches on the mere suspicion of having done a deed which he had often promised to be guilty of but had never dreamed of seriously undertaking. Long after the negro's cries were hushed Hi-lo-lo lay on her couch complaining that she was not well. Nobody thought of her.

Meanwhile Black Hawk and others set forth to track the fugitives. As a matter of course the disappearance of the raft soon became known, and it was promptly agreed by all that the escaped prisoners were floating down the creek toward the open country south of the swamp. Thereupon Black Hawk dispatched runners in hot haste across the island to fetch the canoe, for a more impor-

tant recapture than that of Bold Warrior was now to be attempted.

Some three quarters of an hour later the canoe was brought into the encampment on the shoulders of four Indians, and the bearers set it down to await further orders from Black Hawk. As they looked about them for the alligator chief, their attention was attracted to a crowd in front of Chitta-Miko's tent. During all the noisy commotion of the previous hour nothing had been seen of the medicine-man, whose voice was wont to be heard in every council and whose advice was often of more weight than that of Pretty Crow himself.

"Where is Chitta-Miko?" asked the councilors repeatedly, as the unaccountable escape of the prisoners was being discussed. "What does he say?"

It was soon learned that the medicine-man had not been seen to issue from his tent that morning. A circumstance so unusual, in view of the cries of alarm that had startled

the camp at sunrise, did not pass unnoticed. Pretty Crow and his council presently moved forward in a body and stood before Chitta-Miko's lodge, their faces showing great curiosity and some alarm, as they called his name loudly and received no reply. Some one suggested that he might be in communion with the spirits who came as messengers from Isakita Immissi, the Master of Life, and for some little time with one accord the assembly hesitated to call him again or to enter the tent. But at last, fearing that harm might have come to him, Pretty Crow ordered the curtains of the door to be thrown back, and the chiefs and councilors approached cautiously and looked in.

Chitta-Miko lay stretched out on the ground in the centre of the tent as if dead. His face was bloodless and his limbs rigid. His medicine bag lay beside him, open, as though he had been stricken in the very act of manipulating its mysterious contents. The rattlesnake in the corner, though lying in coil,

seemed to stir with a continuing restlessness, and the owl on the pole, while surveying the objects beneath him with his usual wise stare, was evidently ill at ease.

"He is dead," said Pretty Crow, and commanded two young men to enter and bear him forth from the sacred precincts.

Filled with awe, the assembly looked on in silence as the order was tremblingly obeyed. Chitta-Miko was brought out and laid gently on the grass in the sun. Then it was seen that he was not really dead, but only that he lay in a deep, unnatural sleep. The sunshine, the voices, the handling he had received, roused and slowly brought him to full wakefulness. He opened his eyes, stared stupidly a few moments, sat up, and at length rose and began to speak.

"Listen, men of the Muscogee," he said in the Creek tongue. "I have seen the red, bloody river that was shown in the old time to our fathers. I have seen the white fire from the east which they would not use. I

have seen the blue fire that came from Walhalle which they also rejected. I have seen the black fire from the west which they likewise refused. And I have seen the fire of red and yellow which they accepted and use to this day. Men of the Muscogee, listen; this was not all. I have also looked on the mountain shown in the vision to our ancient fathers, the mountain that thundered and upon which was the sound of singing. But instead of singing I heard the noise of battle, and there was a great and fearful carnage. Looking behind me, I saw a mighty band of mounted men rushing down from the northeast with bright swords in their hands. From the north there came another band and from the east another, and at the south there was a great company that awaited their coming.

"Men of the Muscogee, listen; the faces of all these were white. The white men are gathering to the battle. Listen, my brothers; I have seen them and they are strong. Let us go, then, before they join their forces; let

us fly to the Seminole land before they fall on us and crush us. I have spoken."

The sensation caused by these strange prophetic utterances was manifest. Dread settled on many a face, and the old men spoke promptly in favor of heeding the warning that had been given Chitta-Miko in his strange, deep sleep. Even Pretty Crow, much as he desired to see the escaped prisoners recaptured, felt convinced of the wisdom of this advice and seemed inclined to give the order for an immediate evacuation of the encampment. But Black Hawk intervened.

"To-morrow," he said. "To-morrow let us march forth early and travel with all speed, but to-day let us find that which is lost. Not until we have reclaimed our own am I ready to move."

"To-morrow it shall be," said Pretty Crow, after some hesitation. Gladly would he have opposed Black Hawk, but their wishes coincided, and reluctantly he listened to the advice of the younger chief. "To-day let us do

the work before us," he continued. "While some follow on the track of the prisoners, others will prepare for the march and to-morrow at dawn we shall go forth. We are not children, and may trust in our strength. Woe to these white men if they molest us!"

"I have spoken, but the chiefs will not hearken," said Chitta-Miko ominously, fixing a sad, earnest gaze on the face of Pretty Crow. "In the roar of battle, when the red men fall like ripe leaves before the winds of autumn, these wise chiefs will remember the words of Chitta-Miko, the man of medicine."

With this prophetic utterance the displeased and sorrowing seer turned his back on the assembly, reentered his tent and dropped the curtains of the door behind him. There were murmurs of discontent from the fearful old men, but Pretty Crow disregarded them and repeated his announcement that the tribe was not to march until the morrow. Chitta-Miko's final warning was not even heard by Black Hawk, the latter being already on his

way to the water's edge, preceded by the young men bearing the canoe.

As they were compelled to depend largely on the movement of the sluggish current to carry them forward, Julian and Maggie did not make rapid headway. Even if they had been provided with a paddle, they could have added but little to the speed of their clumsy craft. The raft was composed of three ten-inch cypress logs about twelve feet long, lashed rather loosely together with ropes of cowhide. It was buoyant enough to float two persons, but was too heavy to be paddled. It could only be poled, after the manner of the backwoods "flat" or ferry-boat.

Bidding Maggie seat herself as comfortably as possible near the front, Julian took his stand in the rear and pushed off from land by means of the long light pole which he found ready to his hand. The darkness being intense, he was not always sure that they were following the creek's narrow channel, but he kept on thrusting the pole into the

muddy bottom. Whenever they ran against obstructions the same pole served to push them off and set them afloat again.

When day dawned the dreary flooded swamp was seen stretching away on all sides as far as the eye could reach, and Julian doubted if they had traveled more than a mile. Though tortuous in its windings, the channel of the creek was sufficiently wide to permit of an unobstructed passage, and with the help of daylight the boy was able to use his pole to better advantage. Thus their speed was now much increased. Maggie's spirits rose with every yard of their progress, and she soon prattled gayly of the sensation they would create when they had emerged from the swamp, crossed the country and entered Newton. But Julian showed increasing anxiety and frequently cast searching glances over his shoulder.

"The very first thing they'll do," he said at last, after warning Maggie not to speak so loudly, "will be to bring the canoe across the

island and put after us. Dan didn't take the canoe, you know. He got off without it somehow and the Indians found it. They were talking in the camp all day yesterday about how they were looking for him in the 'bithlow.' And they'll be chasing us in that very bithlow before long."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Maggie. "Do hurry, then, Julian, as fast as you can."

"They're sure to catch up with us, no matter how much we hurry," was the reply. "All we can do is to hide the raft, if we can find a good place, and wait for them to go by."

He calculated that they had been on the road about two hours and that the island had been left some three miles behind, when he began to push the raft out of the current and work it into an opening on the right between a low tussock covered with cassina bushes and a tall growth of swamp flags. This seemed the best that could be done, but obstructions prevented the raft from being pushed in far enough to screen it entirely from the observa-

tion of a passing canoe. Maggie thought they ought to go further and secure a better haven, but Julian feared there was little time to spare and hesitated. He soon found a way out of the dilemma. Observing that the outward end of the raft floated in water scarcely two feet deep, it occurred to him to break a dozen of the cassina bushes from the back of the tussock, thrust the long stems into the muddy bottom, and thus furnish a screen of apparently living growth. The leaves of cuttings standing thus in cool water would not be likely to wither for several hours, and the appearance from the creek was of a continuous growth of cassina bushes from the top of the low tussock on a gradual slant to the point where the water flags began.

The boy contemplated his work with satisfaction, and well he might, for the contrivance was cunning enough to mislead even the hawk eye of an Indian, so long as the leaves remained fresh. There was soon good reason to be glad that Maggie's advice had not been fol-

lowed. Scarcely ten minutes had passed after the work was complete when Julian heard the hurried dip of paddles. Urging Maggie in a whisper to lie flat on the raft, the boy crouched down on his knees, and peeping through the screen, he soon saw Black Hawk and another Indian glide rapidly by in the canoe, casting frequent searching glances to right and left.

Minutes passed before even a whisper was heard on the raft, but at the end of half an hour Maggie sat up inquiring how long they would have to remain there. "Until they come back and go up the creek," was the reply of the sagacious boy, who knew that not until then would it be safe to venture from their retreat.

The sun climbed higher and it grew warm. Hours passed. Maggie became feverishly impatient. Not only were they exposed to the baking sun, the bites of mosquitoes and yellow swamp flies, but every minute the pangs of hunger became harder to bear. They had

not brought a morsel of food and were equally without the prospect of securing any until their journey was over. So far as he knew, Julian's rifle still lay under the log at the upper end of the island, but even if it had been at hand, to shoot at a bird would have been suicidal. Nor was it possible to catch fish without lines or prudent to build a fire.

"We've just got to grin and bear it," said Julian, philosophically, and hour after hour he lay without a murmur, unweariedly scanning the stretch of creek water visible through the screen of bushes.

It was a short while after he had noticed with grave concern that some of the leaves were slightly wilted that Julian uttered a warning "Sh!" and Maggie again flattened herself out on the raft, and listened in dread to the dip of the passing paddles. The boy held his very breath, as Black Hawk's glance fell and lingered upon the screen of make-believe bushes. Whatever may have been the Indian chief's momentary thought, he did

not alter his course, and the canoe passed swiftly on.

Half an hour later Julian poled the raft out into the current and they dropped down the stream once more, overheated, ravenously hungry, but cheerful and full of hope.

About mid-afternoon, as they were at last emerging from the swamp, the open pine lands being plainly visible ahead, Julian suddenly stopped punting to listen, and told Maggie that he had heard a faint and far sound suggesting a drum and fife.

"May be it's the soldiers!" the girl cried joyfully.

A moment later another sound was heard that froze the smile on her lips—the rapid dip of paddles. Glancing over his shoulder, Julian saw that a canoe containing two Indians had shot around a bend of the stream and was now within a hundred yards. The Indian in the bow of the canoe promptly covered the boy with his rifle. Had he been alone, Julian would doubtless have taken the

chances of leaping into the creek, swimming the few intervening feet and darting into the bushes fringing the shore. As it was, he saw there was no escape, and tried to induce Maggie to accept their hard fate philosophically.

The boy supposed that, after returning to the island, Black Hawk had not paddled far up the creek before he decided that it was out of the question to expect to overhaul the prize in that direction. The raft had inevitably been poled down stream, and as it could not outdistance the canoe even with a start of several hours, it followed that the fugitives lay hidden somewhere along the creek's borders while their pursuers were passing. To be once convinced of this, was to put about forthwith and go spinning down stream again.

"Come in," ordered Black Hawk, as the canoe ran alongside and the other Indian laid hold of the raft.

Julian quietly obeyed, but Maggie at first passionately refused, her eyes filling with angry tears.

"Come along,—it can't be helped," the boy urged. "If you don't, they'll take hold of you and make you."

A prospect so repulsive caused Maggie to reconsider. Suppressing a frantic sob, she meekly stepped forward and took the place assigned to her, but Black Hawk felt far from comfortable, under the fiery glance which she fixed upon him. The raft was set adrift and allowed to float on down to the open country, while the heavily-loaded canoe swept round and moved upward against the sluggish current.

## CHAPTER XX

### FROM THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE

It was with very great difficulty that Dan made his way into the flooded swamp. The darkness was intense and unseen impediments were everywhere. There were comparatively open spaces where it was possible to wade or swim with ease for a few feet, but the swamp here as elsewhere was for the most part crowded with growing flags, submerged mosses and weeds, and the rotting branches of fallen trees. One entanglement succeeded another, and meanwhile time pressed. Nevertheless the fugitive was not content to halt until a distance of several hundred yards separated him from the shore.

Believing that the Indians had found the canoe and would pursue him as soon as day dawned he saw that his only hope was in hiding himself and awaiting an opportunity

to land and cross the island. How to do this in a way to baffle the keen-scented dog that would certainly accompany the party in the canoe was a problem of most difficult if not impossible solution, and Dan recognized that his situation was desperate. To climb a tree would be easy enough, but how long could he remain in its branches unobserved? No better plan suggested itself, however, and he determined on it as a temporary resource. It would at least be a refuge from the mud, water, and the horror of unseen reptiles.

The water was only knee-deep where Dan halted, and though all his surroundings were shrouded in thick darkness, he knew that he must be standing on the upward slope of a tree-grown tussock. Looking up he saw a large leaf-covered branch dimly outlined between him and the brightening sky. A bold leap upward fixed his hands firmly upon it, and though it bent far down toward the water, it bore his weight, and he swung himself upward hand over hand until he reached the trunk.

A few moments later he was seated among the topmost branches of the tree, and there, wet, chilled and miserable, he watched the dawning light of the first of July slowly chase away the darkness of the swamp.

It was not long now before he heard the launching of the canoe and an occasional short bark from the hound taken aboard. The party would be certain to pass near him and even if the sharp eyes of the Creek warriors should search in vain, the dog could not fail to locate him. Yet Dan remained immovable, helplessly awaiting his fate. He felt that he could do no more.

By this time he had ascertained that he was perched in the branches of a water-oak, in full leaf, growing on a tussock within a few feet of an immense, aged cypress, the spreading branches of the former embracing the trunk of the latter. It occurred to Dan that if the trunk of the cypress were perhaps one-fourth its present size, he could easily lean forward, clasp his arms round it and climb more than

thirty feet higher. But he had no desire to accomplish the feat, knowing that in the thin leafage of the cypress' top he would be even more exposed to view than at present.

Turning in his place to look more narrowly at the huge trunk, he saw a circular opening directly opposite him and apparently no less than a foot in diameter. Evidently there was a hollow in the old tree, doubtless furnishing a nest for squirrels or large birds. Dan wondered if it could be the result of some past forest fire, or merely of the industrious pecking of birds or burrowing of animals into the rotting heart of the old cypress. Pulling aside the branches obstructing his view of it, to his amazement and delight he saw that the opening was more than twice as large as he at first had supposed. Moreover, it was within reach of his grasp, should he move a foot or two nearer on the limb supporting him.

Without wasting time to consider the plan now suggested, Dan threw himself forward, grasped the sides of the opening, and finding

the wood firm, drew his body with some difficulty into the hollow of the tree, meanwhile conscious of a scratching sound, accompanied by a frightened squeak and the whisking past him of a large fox-squirrel that skurried wildly up the side of the cypress to the very top.

The cavity proved to be nearly five feet deep and varied in width from one foot to three. Half standing, half sitting and by no means quite comfortable, Dan rested quiet, with his face to the opening, whence he could see nothing but the foliage of the water-oak. Confident that this same crowding foliage would screen the opening from the view of any one at the foot of the cypress, the refugee's hopes rose with a bound. The dog might scent him out, but his masters, believing that a squirrel was the cause of the creature's excitement, would pass on. And so it was.

Less than five minutes after Dan entered the hollow he heard the dip of paddles and then the excited barking of the dog from a point so close at hand as to indicate that the canoe

had halted within arm's length of the tussock. The halt was long and the suspense most trying to the hunted man. The Indians gazed searchingly up into the water-oak, although it could be seen almost at once that the fugitive was not there. The dog's manner being so excited, their suspicions were not immediately allayed, and it was suggested that one of the party climb the tree and make sure. It was at this juncture that the frightened squirrel in the top of the cypress performed good service by changing its position and attracting the eye of those below. This was at once accepted as a reasonable explanation of the dog's excitement and the canoe passed on.

Thus was Dan saved from immediate recapture in the most unforeseen of ways. All day he remained immovable in his retreat, listening intently and hearing now and then the dip of paddles, the low murmur of voices, and the barking not only of the dog in the passing and repassing canoe but of those on shore. But for the sharp, cruel hunger that attacked

him ere long, and his anxieties in regard to the fate of Maggie and Julian he would have been fairly comfortable and content to bide his time. Though he often chafed like a caged lion, he well knew that it was madness to move until late in the night, and struggled to bear his sufferings with fortitude.

The long, dreary day was over at last and night came on. Dan now began to twist and turn in order to bring life into his cramped and aching limbs before he attempted to descend from his hiding-place. He soon saw that it would not be safe to venture forth until a late hour, for the gleam of a camp-fire reached him from the shore and the yelping of dogs from time to time reminded him that the Indians were still on the watch. The long waiting and inactivity brought upon him a mental as well as physical weariness, and some hours after night he fell into a profound slumber, from which he awoke only at dawn of the second day.

The unfortunate young man now saw many

hours of captivity still before him, for as the day advanced, from sounds that reached him now and then, he judged that the island shore was still watched by the mystified but suspicious red men. At noon of the second day his gnawing hunger was partly appeased by a small store of last season's walnuts, chinkapins, and hickory-nuts which he found at the bottom of the hollow. A full half of these were unsound, but the good ones were appreciated at their full value.

As night drew on, all appeared quiet on the shore, and Dan was emboldened to change his position from the hollow of the cypress to the fork of the water-oak while still there was light enough to distinguish surrounding objects. The change was not effected without extreme difficulty. Much turning and twisting were necessary in order to restore the circulation in his lower limbs before he could even lift himself into the opening of the hollow, and as no branch of the water-oak calculated to sustain his great weight was

within reach of his arms, he found it necessary to leap into the tree. But the leap was taken with due courage and with no results worse than bruised hands and a disagreeable physical shock.

The change was made at dusk, but it was long after midnight before Dan ventured to step into the water and begin his noisy progress toward the shore. He landed unmolested at the point near the prostrate pine, took to the bushes at once and began a slow and guarded advance across the island toward that point on the eastern side whence it was possible to wade out of the swamp. Unfortunately the sky was overcast with clouds and it was extremely difficult in the thick darkness to keep the proper course over unfamiliar ground. In spite of the greatest caution he went astray and lost an hour of valuable time. The whole island now seemed as still as a grave, and Dan had reason to hope that all the tired sentinels were ere this asleep at their posts.

Once he suddenly checked his cautious ad-

vance, on seeing several white ghostly objects dimly outlined a short distance in front, and was stricken with amazement and fright to discover that these objects were tents and that he stood on the very borders of the sleeping encampment. Finding that his approach had attracted no attention, he was quick to recover his self-possession, and had he known where to lay hands on food, he would have risked everything to get it, such was his ravening hunger.

Stealing away from the dangerous neighborhood, he took his bearings as best he could and went on his way. He was approaching the eastern limits of the island some time later, moving with less caution than he had shown at the outset, when suddenly the figure of a man rose before him in the gloom, as if to question him or dispute his passage. The figure was within six feet, and after a momentary recoil Dan was about to spring forward and begin the inevitable conflict, when he felt himself seized from behind.

At the same instant the figure in front leaped toward him, and a third started up from the gloom on his right. He saw at once that he had stumbled upon a spot where several sleepy sentinels were taking their ease, prudently refraining from lighting a fire. The desperate struggle that followed was soon over. Without even a knife with which to defend himself, weakened by two days of fasting and disheartened by the odds against him, Dan was soon forced to yield, and submitted to having his hands tied behind his back.

And so, after two days of heroic struggle for liberty, he was led back to the Indian encampment in the cloudy dawn of the third of July.

The whole camp was astir. The women were cooking the morning meal and the men were striking the tents and otherwise preparing to load the beasts and make ready for the outward march which was to be begun at the earliest possible moment. The arrival of Bold Warrior and his captors was the signal for the suspension of work on every hand. The camp

resounded with yells of delight, both sexes crowding round to look and jeer at the prisoner. A hurried council being held, it was voted with only one dissenting voice, that of Chitta-Miko, the medicine-man, that the outward march be delayed just long enough to burn Bold Warrior at the stake. When told of his doom, Dan turned very pale, but did not protest. He only said:

"Give me something to eat, so I can stand it like a man. I'm near 'bout starved."

This request was promptly granted. The Indians knew that the weaker he was, the more quickly would he succumb, and their delight in the spectacle of his sufferings would be too soon cut short. A dish of steaming food was at once brought to him, but before he tasted it he made another request which was also granted. On entering the confines of the camp, his eyes were quick to locate Maggie and Julian seated in the central space under guard, eating their breakfast. He now asked permission to join them and was con-

ducted thither. Seated before them, all three being encircled by guards, he told his story, and listened to theirs, while eating ravenously.

It was a sad story of heroic effort and continuing mishap on both sides. And yet all agreed that nothing but singular good fortune could have delayed Dan's execution to the present hour. They had now spent a whole week in and out of the Indian camp, dependent entirely upon their own exertions and with no tidings from their friends. The seeming indifference of the local soldiery, their inexplicable delay in providing themselves with reinforcements and marching to the rescue, was spoken of by Julian with contemptuous astonishment.

"After Dr. Foscue promised Uncle Cyrus to march in here with 'em the very next morning, too!"

"I don't reckon I'd be proud to be one of the Baker County militia this week," was all Dan said.

"They're good-for-nothin' cowards!" cried Maggie, with flashing eyes.

Here they were interrupted, and, regardless of Maggie's cries and Julian's protest and threats of punishment to follow, Dan was led forward and bound to a sapling in the centre of the camp. After bits of dry wood had been piled around his feet, and while other features of torture were in preparation, the most expert marksmen began to fire one after another at a target fixed to the sapling only about one inch above the doomed man's head. Poor Dan underwent the distressing ordeal with great courage, but in spite of himself his head involuntarily dodged to one side at every report, seeing which the Indians laughed and hooted in derision.

"Bold Warrior is a woman," they said.

Maggie turned her eyes away and hid her face in her hands weeping bitterly, but Julian stormed and threatened wildly in his rage and grief, warning the Creeks that for every wound inflicted on Dan a dozen warriors would meet

a just and violent death. The torrent of the brave boy's eloquence was suddenly checked by a young Indian who struck him rudely in the face. While leaping toward his assailant with doubled fists Julian was seized and held firmly by his guards. Even then he did not succumb tamely, but declared aloud that the Creek warriors were not men but wolves, beasts, dogs!

A pile of pine splinters, sharpened at the ends, was presently brought forward. These were to be thrust into the victim's flesh and then set on fire, and it was in view of this that Dan had been stripped to the waist before being bound to the sapling. But at the suggestion of Black Hawk, who thought no time should be wasted, Pretty Crow decided that the grumbling spectators must be denied the pleasure of witnessing this inhuman spectacle, and he directed that fire at once be applied to the wood heaped around Dan's feet.

As a warrior stepped forward with a burning brand, exclamations of surprise and alarm

were uttered on all sides, and each person in the crowd looked significantly into the face of his neighbor; for the sound of an uproar and rapid firing was now heard from the eastern quarter of the island.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE BATTLE OF CHICKASAWHATCHEE

And now an Indian scout was seen running into the camp from the east at the top of his speed. He breathlessly reported that a large body of white soldiers, on horseback and afoot, had been seen wading toward the island and that ere this they were no doubt landing in great numbers. Instantly all was panic and confusion, but the clear ringing voice of Black Hawk and the stern commands of Pretty Crow soon restored order.

Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law were ordered to seize and hold Maggie, and four other lusty squaws laid hands on the arms and legs of the struggling boy. The remainder of the women being directed to proceed with the execution of Bold Warrior, the chiefs called upon all the fighting men to follow and rushed

forward to the scene of battle, shouting their wild war cry :

" Yo-ho-ee-hee ! Yo-ho-ee-hee ! Yo-ho-ee-hee ! "

In a few moments the last one of them was lost to view and the squaws, though trembling in their fright, hastened to obey the command of the chiefs. Catching up the firebrand that had been dropped and was now almost extinct, one of the women applied it to the wood at Dan's feet, knelt down and fanned the reviving flame with her breath. Some little time passed before the fire began to make headway, and meanwhile the sounds of continuous firing reached them from the eastern shore of the island.

" Now listen to me, you women," said Dan to the squaws clustering about him. " I know mighty well you'd a long sight rather see me burn than to eat a pot o' honey, but I reckon you've got some sense left. You hear that shootin', don't you? That means that the State o' Georgey has put her finger in the

pie at last, and when she goes into a fight with you Injuns, she ginerally comes out on top."

"Listen!" cried Julian in rapture. "Our boys are just givin' it to 'em!"

"You Injuns ain't fitten to stand up against rale soldiers in a fair fight," continued Dan. "'Sides that, the white men have got you in a trap and before you know it every Injun but the dead ones will be run off this island."

"Bold Warrior know better," interrupted Hi-lo-lo, who stood calmly looking on but taking no part in the lighting of the fire. "Injun brave. No white man brave like Black Hawk."

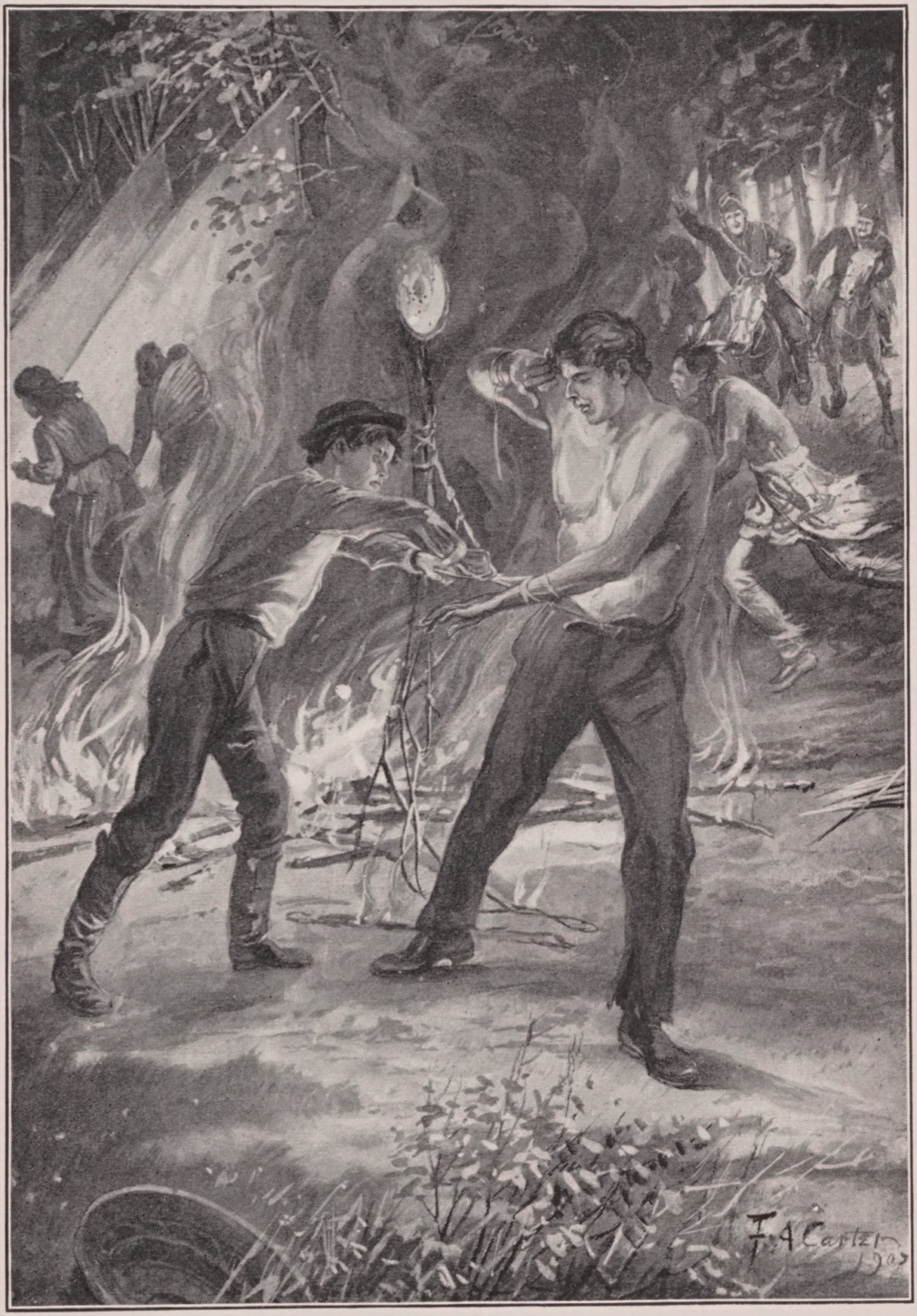
"You just wait till the birds go to roost to-night and see what you'll see," replied Dan. "And if you women know what's good for you, you'll outen this fire before it gits too hot. If you'll do that, I'll undertake to keep the soldiers off'n you. They shan't hurt nary one o' you."

Only contemptuous jeers were brought out

by this pacific proposal, and the wood was now piled over the little flame in a way to create a better draught. Very soon the fire began to reach upward and Dan to feel oppressed by the hot smoke which rose into his face. Julian appealed to Hi-lo-lo and to the squaws who held him, one after another, but all to no purpose. Then in a frenzy of anguish and impotent rage he threatened them wildly, realizing that in a few moments Dan's last chance would be gone.

Meanwhile the sounds of conflict drew nearer and presently a few Indians were seen rushing into the eastern side of the encampment, several dragging after them the dead bodies of comrades. Immediately afterward the thud of horse hoofs was heard and a squad of cavalry burst into view in the open pines beyond the camp on the heels of a dozen Indian braves who ran like deer.

The women stampeded at once, taking to the bushes like so many rats leaping into their holes. But even in their panic their




JULIAN SCATTERED THE BURNING STICKS

stubborn natures resisted the inevitable. They were willing to leave Dan to the flames, knowing that before the soldiers reached him he would be beyond help, but with a singular obstinacy they attempted to drag their prisoners away with them.

But Julian's fierce struggles and the unscrupulous use of his teeth, in addition to the unnerving terror that had seized them, proved too much for the squaws who still held him, and he soon shook himself free. Forgetting Maggie altogether in the presence of Dan's horrible impending fate, the boy flew to the relief of his friend. Fortunately his eye fell upon a large calabash of water close at hand and, catching it up, he dashed the contents against Dan's body, and then scattered the burning sticks with his feet. His pocket knife promptly did the rest.

In a very few moments after Julian's release Dan was also free, and bounding away from the tree of death, he stood coughing and sputtering and blinking in his wet scorched

trousers and bare, smoke-blackened body, while the boy leaped about him and shouted like one gone mad for joy. Thus they were found by some half dozen cavalrymen, all strangers, who galloped up, the foremost leading a horse whereon sat an Indian prisoner whom Julian recognized as Chitta-Miko.

"Don't hurt that Indian," he cried. "He's the only one of the whole lot of 'em who didn't want to burn Dan."

"We don't intend to hurt him," was the answer. "As soon as we caught him he told us to hurry on here and save a young white man's life."

"Did he shore 'nough?" asked Dan, having now rubbed his smoked and watering eyes until he was able to see. "Well, now, he ain't a bad Injun, is he? Julian here got ahead of him, but I'm thankful to him jest the same," he added, with a grateful look at the medicine man.

"I reckon we'll turn him loose when the

fight's over and let him go," continued the soldier.

"Where is Chitta-Miko to go?" muttered the Indian, despairingly. "Isakita Immissi is angry with his children and has scattered them like dying leaves before the winter wind."

"But the fight ain't over," put in another cavalryman. "Come along, boys, and take a hand."

"Gim-me a gun," said Dan eagerly, and one of the mounted men handed him a loaded pistol.

Julian was also furnished with a spare pistol, and thereupon the party wheeled about and rode back toward the scene of continuing conflict. They had marked the flight of the Indian women from afar, but did not think it well to pursue them. Sterner duties called them elsewhere. Just as they started, two riderless Indian ponies dashed into the camp, raced round for half a minute, then came to a halt. Julian ran toward one of them with

coaxing cries and succeeded in capturing it. Mounting and calling out to Dan to take the other pony and follow, he galloped away after the soldiers.

But Dan did not budge. He stood looking round him stupidly. Where was Maggie? "Well if that boy ain't gone crazy and clean forgot Maggie!" he exclaimed aloud, amazed beyond words.

For the moment both had forgotten her, taken up as they were with the escape from the fire and the arrival and departure of the squad of cavalry, all of which had taken place within less than two minutes. Dan's last glimpse of the girl was just before the smoke blinded him, and she was then struggling in the grasp of old Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law. Manifestly the squaws had dragged her after them in their flight into the bushes. There was no room for doubt as to the direction they had taken, and catching up a knife from the ground and armed with the pistol just given him, Dan rushed off in pursuit.

Julian had read of many battles, for he loved books as well as hunting, but never had he pictured to himself such a battle as this. When he reached the top of the slope and looked abroad into the pine barren that crowned the island, he could scarcely tell where was friend and where was foe. There was no firing of volleys from one line of men at another line regularly drawn up to oppose them. Mixed "in confusion dire" seemed the white warriors and the red, and scattered over a great area, fighting in small groups. The main difference in their methods seemed to be that, while the white men showed themselves and charged boldly this way and that, the Indians hugged the cover of the palmettoes, blackjack thickets and gallberry brush.

Into such hiding-places the cavalry charged again and again, chasing them across the open spaces and slashing at them with their sabres. It was the evolutions of these that attracted Julian, filling him with mad enthusiasm and soon carrying him into the

heart of the fray. After them and with them he galloped this way and that, heedless of the flying bullets, and shouting himself hoarse. Even to his inexperienced eye, it was soon clear that the Indians were playing a losing game. When compelled to face their foes in the open, their war-whoop was less and less confident, and they were easily scattered by the cavalry and chased into dense hummocks, often indeed into the stagnant waters of the swamp itself, where they hid themselves in the flags or crouched behind tussocks and tree trunks.

Of all the strange new sights witnessed by Julian that morning, the strangest, he thought, was the spectacle of the Creek warriors risking their lives in order to carry off their dead only to throw them into the swamp. He did not know that this was a universal custom followed by the Indians in order to conceal their losses from the enemy and to prevent the latter from securing scalps. The boy witnessed this gruesome dragging of the dead by the living

into the submerged swamp while galloping down to the prostrate pine under which he had hidden his rifle. Although the errand separated him some distance from his friends and was fraught with great danger, he was not satisfied until he had reached the place, leaped from his captured pony, secured the rifle, remounted and galloped away. Undoubtedly he thus became an easy target for unseen marksmen, and, had he not been Little Tiger-Tail and none other, it is more than likely that he could not have escaped alive.

The Indians being finally routed and driven beyond reach in the dense hummock and the swamp, the pursuing whites were recalled by a few bugle blasts and proceeded toward the camp, whither the bulk of the troops had now marched in triumph. In spite of the heroic efforts of the Creeks to carry off their fallen comrades, thirteen of their dead were found on the field, among whom Julian recognized Pretty Crow, the already repulsive face of the chief being horribly distorted in the death

agony. Of the whites, a dozen or more were wounded but only one was killed.

Not until the camp was reached and he had recovered from the wild excitement of the past hour, did Julian recollect Maggie and look around in vain for Dan. Recalling that his cousin had been heedlessly abandoned, the boy was now overwhelmed with a horror of remorse in the conviction that the Indian women had succeeded in carrying her off, and all the glories of the battle of Chickasawhatchee were forgotten.

## CHAPTER XXII

### HI-LO-LO TRIUMPHS AND JULIAN RIDES TO A WEDDING

Dan rushed madly along the downward slope through the woods, on the track of the fleeing squaws and children. Some ten minutes later he found them huddled together in a dense hummock bordering the swamp, awaiting the issue of the struggle, or rather dreading the approach of the enemy; for already they knew that the gods of battle had decided against them, and that the valiant Muscogees were scattering from the ill-fated field. As Dan burst into their midst, there was much scowling and snarling and they looked eager to attack him, unarmed as they were, but terror withheld them.

Singling out old Sho-ko-chee and Chip-e-lop-law, the young man demanded to know

what they had done with Maggie. At first they refused to speak, but Dan had no sooner leveled his pistol at Sho-ko-chee and she read her death warrant in the furious look of his eye than she made haste to open her stubborn mouth. The Water Lily was not there, the trembling old squaw told him. Only a few moments since Black Hawk had rushed among them, announcing that the pale-faces were countless, Pretty Crow was slain, and the battle was lost. In the confusion that followed, the alligator chief was seen whispering to his wife, and Hi-lo-lo promptly seized her little son by the hand and disappeared among the trees. Black Hawk then ordered the other women to remain where they were until their husbands came for them, and seizing the screaming and struggling Water Lily in his arms, he lifted her bodily and rushed away on the track of his wife.

Learning the direction taken, Dan started off in hot pursuit, soon reaching an elevation whence he looked down a slope to the waters

of the creek and was witness of a curious scene.

On the shore stood Black Hawk, holding the struggling figure of Maggie in his arms. Seated in the canoe about thirty feet from land were Hi-lo-lo and a small Indian boy. It was at once clear to the observer that the alligator chief had furiously and repeatedly ordered his wife to come ashore and take him and his burden aboard, and that the latter stubbornly refused to do so unless he consented to set his captive down and allow her to escape. Thus was Hi-lo-lo mistress of the situation. It would have been easy enough for the Indian to plunge into the water and overtake the canoe, had he been alone; but with Maggie to care for he was powerless.

The appearance of Dan at the top of the slope promptly brought matters to a crisis. Hi-lo-lo cried out warningly that the white men were coming, and turning to look, Black Hawk became convinced that his wife spoke the truth, though he saw only Dan. He felt

that there was not a moment to lose, and he must make his choice. Setting his burden gently down, he turned away with a gesture of despair, and leaping into the creek, swam to meet the advancing canoe. Meanwhile Maggie ran toward her rescuer, who raised his pistol and covered Black Hawk, as the latter climbed aboard.

"Don't shoot!" screamed the girl. "You might hit Hi-lo-lo."

Dan lowered his weapon, promptly moved by this appeal, being well aware that but for the young Indian woman's courageous opposition to the will of her husband, he would not have arrived in time for Maggie's rescue. In a very few moments the canoe passed from view among the trees, and Dan and Maggie walked hurriedly up the slope, the latter inquiring anxiously about Julian.

On the outskirts of the camp they encountered a company of soldiers just returning from the victorious field, and these, being told of the hiding-place of the Creek women,

rushed away with enthusiasm, bent on capturing the whole lot. It was while Dan stood directing them that Dr. Foscue and Tommy Lumpkin, wet and bedraggled from their march with the soldiers into the swamp and presenting a rather forlorn appearance, rushed up and greeted Maggie with evidences of great satisfaction.

"This will be a happy day for Mr. Keswick," said the doctor. "He's been plumb distracted about you."

"Yes, I reckon it's been a hard week for Uncle Cyrus," rejoined Maggie, glad to see the doctor's familiar face.

"It's mighty lucky we got here before the Injuns carried you off to Fluridy," remarked Tommy Lumpkin with a self-important air.

"Well, all I've got to say is, you took your time a-comin'," said Maggie, dryly. "If Julian and Dan Dennard hadn't been here to keep the Injuns busy, I reckon I'd 'a' been in Fluridy and married to Pretty Crow by this time!"

Poor crest-fallen Tommy was ready with no reply, but Dr. Foscue answered meekly that he had done everything within the power of man to do in order to persuade the militia to invade the swamp at once. It was not his fault that his efforts failed; the militia had declared that it was suicidal and refused to move until help came.

"That's what we thought," replied the girl, amiably enough, "and maybe it was right. But Julian and Dan didn't wait for no slow-coach militia. There's two men for you, if one of 'em is a boy!"

The arrival of Julian on his captured pony, hurrahing and shouting in his great joy at finding Maggie quite safe, put an end to this embarrassing conversation.

Some time later Colonel Beall and the four captains who accompanied him on the march to the island, sat down to lunch with Maggie, Dan and Julian in the council house, the largest tent still standing. Dan had washed the smoke from his face and recovered the

blue-checked shirt of which he had been stripped, but felt none the less awkward in such grand company, and was very brief when called upon to tell his story. Not so Julian and Maggie, who each in turn entertained the officers with graphic accounts of all that had occurred in and out of the Creek camp during the past week, provoking laughter more often than expressions of indignation.

"If you weren't such a youngster," said Colonel Beall once to Julian, in the hearing of all, "I should be inclined to say that you had fairly won the young lady. But under the circumstances, I suppose she'll have to content herself with the other hero whose claims, we must all admit, are highly respectable."

Whereupon Maggie tossed her little red head and remarked, in substance, that after refusing to wed two such distinguished characters as Black Hawk and Pretty Crow, she would not be likely to content herself with "common folks." Everybody laughed heart-

ily except the "other hero," who looked very uncomfortable behind his make-believe smile.

The Indian women and children had been promptly captured and brought as prisoners into the camp, and before the officers had risen from the meal, Julian made bold to inquire of Colonel Beall what he expected to do with them.

"What would you do with them, my little man? Would you treat them as they treated you?"

"No, sir. I'd let them go to their friends in Florida, and send Chitta-Miko with them."

The colonel had a good heart, although brave and terrible in battle. He seemed to like the suggestion, and to be more pleased than ever with the boy who made it; but he said: "If Chitta-Miko is a man, he cannot go. Not a man of them shall be allowed to join the vicious Seminoles, if it can be prevented."

But after he had heard all about Chitta-Miko, how he disapproved of taking vengeance

on helpless prisoners, how he had opposed the burning of Dan, and sought to save the young man's life even after his own capture, Colonel Beall decided that to send such an Indian to Florida could do no harm and might do some good. The medicine-man was sent for and presently stood before the officers and their guests in the council-house.

"What have you to say for yourself?" asked the colonel, by no means gently.

"Nothing," was the proud answer.

"Well, fortunately I have good reports of you, and I am going to let you go. You may take the women and children and continue your march to Florida, but the other redskins scattered through this swamp shall be hunted down to a man. They have scalped unoffending men and helpless women, and shall be treated as outlaws."

"My poor brothers have sinned," said Chitta-Miko humbly. "They would not listen to me—my poor Indians! They cannot forget their wrongs."

"No excuses, if you please," interrupted Colonel Beall, sharply. "I hope you will be more successful in teaching the Seminoles the humanity which you profess than you have been with the Creeks. You should teach them that their great white father at Washington is their friend and will treat them well, if they will only listen to his messages and bury the tomahawk."

"If the great white father is our friend, why will he not protect us from those who are devouring and never full—the hungry white land-grabbers?"

"Silence!" ordered the colonel. "I am not here to listen to charges against my government from an Indian prisoner."

Julian's eyes were full of sympathy as they now rested on the medicine-man. He feared that neither Colonel Beall nor the "great white father" at Washington knew all, and that there were two sides to this Indian question. He recalled the declaration of Chitta-Miko that land had been sold the

United States by certain venal Creek chiefs without the consent of their brother chiefs or the councils of their nation, with war as a result.

"You may take a few mules," added Colonel Beall, "so that the children and old women may ride, and in order to carry provisions and tents."

"The white chief's heart is kind and his hand is open," said Chitta-Miko, gratefully, "but why should the weak and helpless march out only to have the white men fall upon them? Isakita Immissi is angry with his children and the Muscogees are scattered to the four winds. The hour of which we were warned has come. Let us die here!"

"No one will harm you; I will give you a passport," said the soldier, more gently than at first.

The promise was kept. A paper was drawn up and signed by the colonel and the four captains, setting forth that one Chitta-Miko, "a trustworthy Creek Indian," was to be allowed

to pass freely southward into the Seminole lines, together with the Indian women and children in his charge. Armed with the same, the medicine-man departed some two hours later, with all the squaws and children, and with the mules, a few tents and provisions to last them on their journey.

They were preceded an hour by Maggie, Dan, Julian, Dr. Foscue and young Lumpkin, accompanied by a strong guard. The journey homeward was without accident, and Maggie was restored to the arms of her uncle before the sun had set.

And here the story of a plucky boy's adventures in the Creek war comes to an end. There is nothing more to add, except that about three years later Julian Curtis, then a fine manly youth of seventeen with good prospects of a successful and honorable life before him, again rode down from Columbus to the vicinity of the Chickasawhatchee, this time astride of his well-beloved Indian pony, in

order to witness the marriage of Maggie and Dan. For the bashful young backwoods giant had at last succeeded in triumphing over the numerous other suitors, and was the happiest of men. In explaining to the honored visitor the circumstances of her final surrender, the bride remarked with every appearance of artless simplicity:

"You see, Julian, honey, Dan was the only rale man in the whole raft of 'em that come a-pesterin' me, and I just had to put up with him and take him. If you had 'a' been older, it might 'a' been different, but, gracious me, you was such a child, you know."

"You can't fool me," retorted the astute boy. "I knew from the start that you loved the very ground Dan walked on."

In reply to this Maggie burst into a merry laugh and informed the lad that he "never did have the sense he was born with." To her uncle, a few minutes later, however, she declared that Julian Curtis had "more sense"

than "half the men in Baker County put together."

During his stay at the Keswick farm, Julian one day encountered Hightower's Joe, and obtained through him some interesting news. It appeared that the negro had escaped to Florida with the fugitive Indians, but after three years had wearied of the wild life they led and voluntarily returned to the farm of his white master in Georgia, where work was indeed a necessity, but where also there were biscuits and cabbages in abundance. Tantalizing visions of the latter, he laughingly confessed, had brought him home.

He reported that Chitta-Miko had in due time reached the Seminole land, together with the women and children in his charge, and was still practicing the arts of the spirit-doctor in the villages of the kindred tribe. Black Hawk had also arrived there with his wife and little son, and was yet living as the acknowledged head of the remnant of the Creeks, who put in an appearance daily in twos and

threes for weeks after their dispersion on the ill-fated day of the battle of Chickasawhatchee. He had taken no other wife and had apparently forgiven the rebellious Hi-lo-lo who seemed well content in these latter days.

According to Hightower's Joe, whose word was not as good as a bond, but who might be safely trusted in this instance, both the worthy medicine-man and the proud alligator chief often spoke in the friendliest way of Julian, declaring that they would always remember with admiration and affection the brave boy whom they still distinguished by his Indian name of "Little Tiger-Tail."

# HISTORICAL POSTSCRIPT

ACCORDING to an account in White's Historical Collections of Georgia, the battle of Chickasawhatchee "was the hardest fought of the war with the Creek Indians in 1836." The brief chronicle is as follows:

"On the third of July, a week after the Indians entered the swamp, the two Baker companies (local militia commanded by Captains Rich and Hentz) having been joined by Captain Jarnigan's company from Stewart County, Captain Holmes' company from Early County, a company from Thomas County, and a company of cavalry from Bibb County, numbering together about five hundred men, the whole under the command of Colonel Beall, it was determined to attack the Indian camp. Accordingly two hundred men were stationed outside the swamp to prevent the escape of the enemy (and to guard the horses and stores, says another account); and these were subsequently joined by Captain Bostwick's company from Pulaski County.

"The remaining force penetrated the swamp, through the undergrowth, mud and water, sometimes to their waists, to the Indian camp, when a warmly-contested battle of more than half an hour was maintained; until the Indians were driven from

the field, leaving nine dead together with their horses and plunder. Several dead were seen to be carried off the field during the battle, and some were afterward found by the whites. Of the Georgia troops, twelve or fourteen were wounded, one mortally. The Indians were dispersed, and being closely pursued by the different companies, were for the most part made captive or killed before reaching Florida. The consequences of this action were very important, as it prevented the junction of a band of brave and experienced warriors with the Seminoles, who were then giving the General Government much trouble in Florida."

An account, said to be written immediately after the battle by an officer taking part in it, which appeared in the Columbus (Ga.) *Sentinel*, during the same year (1836), gives further particulars as follows:

"After marching about four miles in mud and water from knee-deep to their waists, the advance guard discovered the enemy's tents pitched on dry ground ('an island in the middle of the Chickasawhatchee swamp,' says the other writer), and such being their eagerness to fight, they cracked away at an Indian who chanced to be walking down to the water to wash his hands. This alarmed the whole camp and they rushed out and commenced a regular fire at our men behind the cover of trees, etc., led on by a chief who did all he could to

encourage his men, until an unerring ball from a rifle laid him prostrate upon the earth. The firing lasted about twenty minutes, when the charge was made and the enemy fled with precipitation, leaving thirteen dead upon the field, and ample evidence of a much greater number being slain; many were seen to be picked up and carried off.

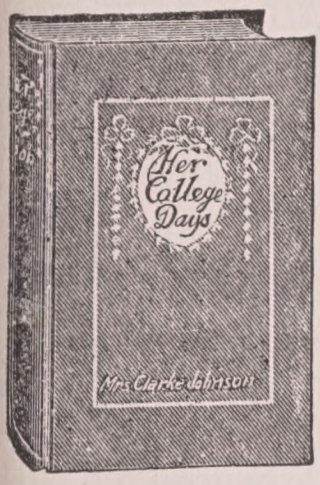
"The Indians had thirty-six tents and an incredible quantity of beef, bacon, horses, saddles, bridles, homespun cloth, cooking utensils, etc., all of which fell into the hands of the victorious whites. Many rifles were also taken. Two dead Indians have been found since the battle and some twenty-five or thirty horses and mules taken. It is impossible to say how many Indians there are. Tom Carr's estimate is generally believed to be correct; he numbered them at three hundred. There were at any rate thirty-six cloth tents. Colonel Beall had two hundred and seventy-five men."

The account closes with the statement that the scattered Indians were endeavoring to escape to their friends in Florida, but that their prospects were the reverse of promising, "for the boys are mad and determined to have them."

THE END

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## Her Father's Legacy

*By Helen Sherman Griffith* *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

Suddenly bereft of father and fortune, a young girl finds herself face to face with the world. Except for a deed to some waste land, there is practically no estate whatever. To make matters worse, the executor of the estate endeavors to appropriate the deed to the land. The heroine engages in a long and heroic struggle for its possession. She succeeds in regaining it, and the land itself proves to be most valuable because of its location in a rich oil-producing district.

## *An Odd Little Lass*

*By Jessie E. Wright* *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

This is a story of the regeneration of a little street waif. She begins life in a lowly court of a large city. Her adventures are numerous, and often quite exciting. After a time she is transplanted to the country, where after many thrilling experiences she eventually grows into a useful and lovable young woman. The story is pleasantly told, and abounds in interesting incident.

"The story is an intensely interesting one, and abounds in pleasing and unique situations."—*Religious Telescope*, Dayton, Ohio.

## *An Every-Day Heroine*

*By Mary A. Denison* *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

The heroine is not an impossible character but only a pure, winsome, earnest girl, who at fourteen years of age is suddenly bereft of fortune and father and becomes the chief support of a semi-invalid mother. While there are many touching scenes, the story as a whole is bright and cheerful and moves forward with a naturalness and ease that carries its readers along and makes them reluctant to put down the book until the end is reached.

## *Her Wilful Way*

*By Helen Sherman Griffith* *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

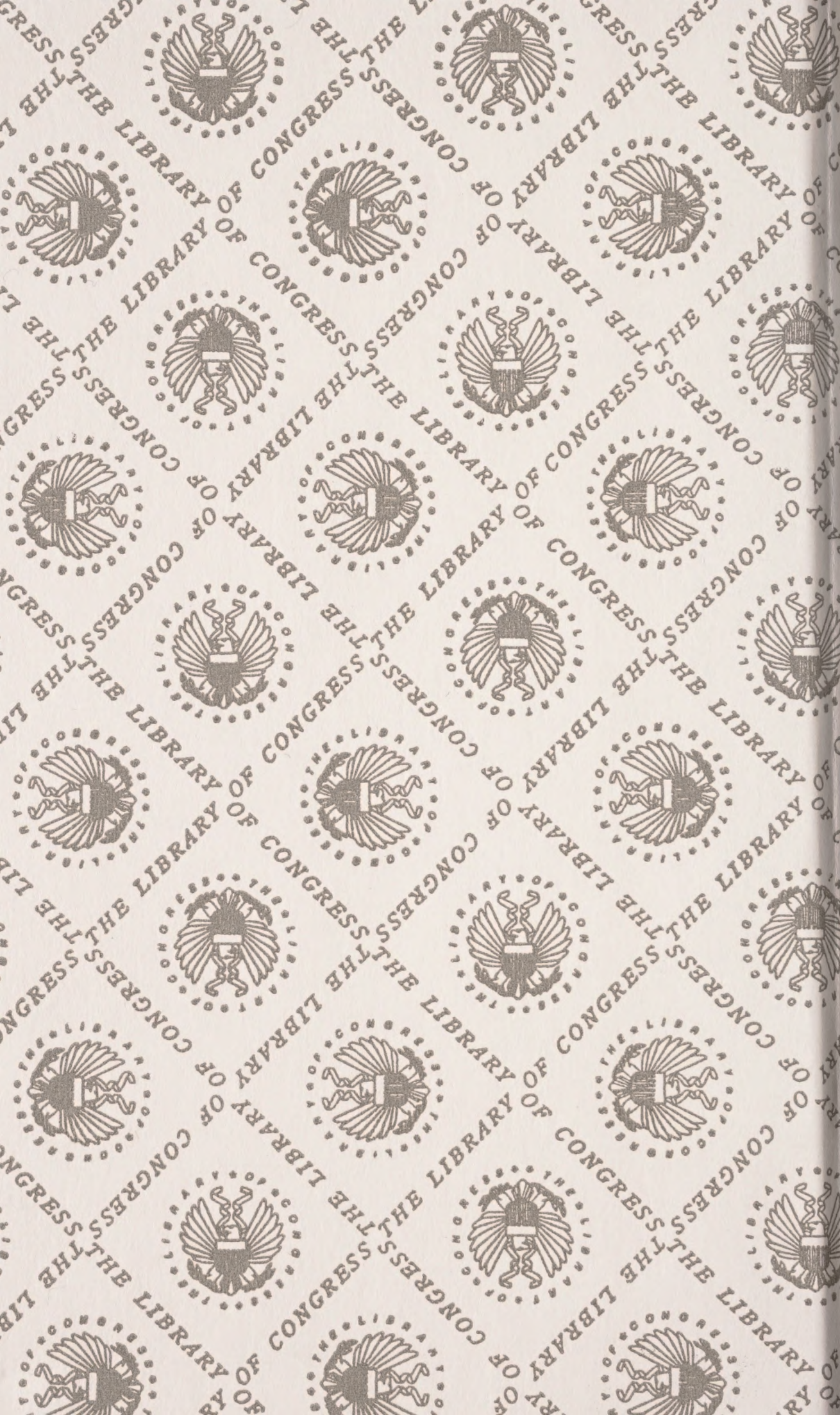
Lucile, a girl of strong will and quick temper, but generous and truthful, is confronted with a stepmother. Her rebellious spirit is aroused, and she is sent away to school where she becomes an acknowledged leader in many pranks. Suffering an attack of fever, she is nursed by her stepmother and the two become reconciled.

*Price, 90c., net; Postage, 12c.*

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